

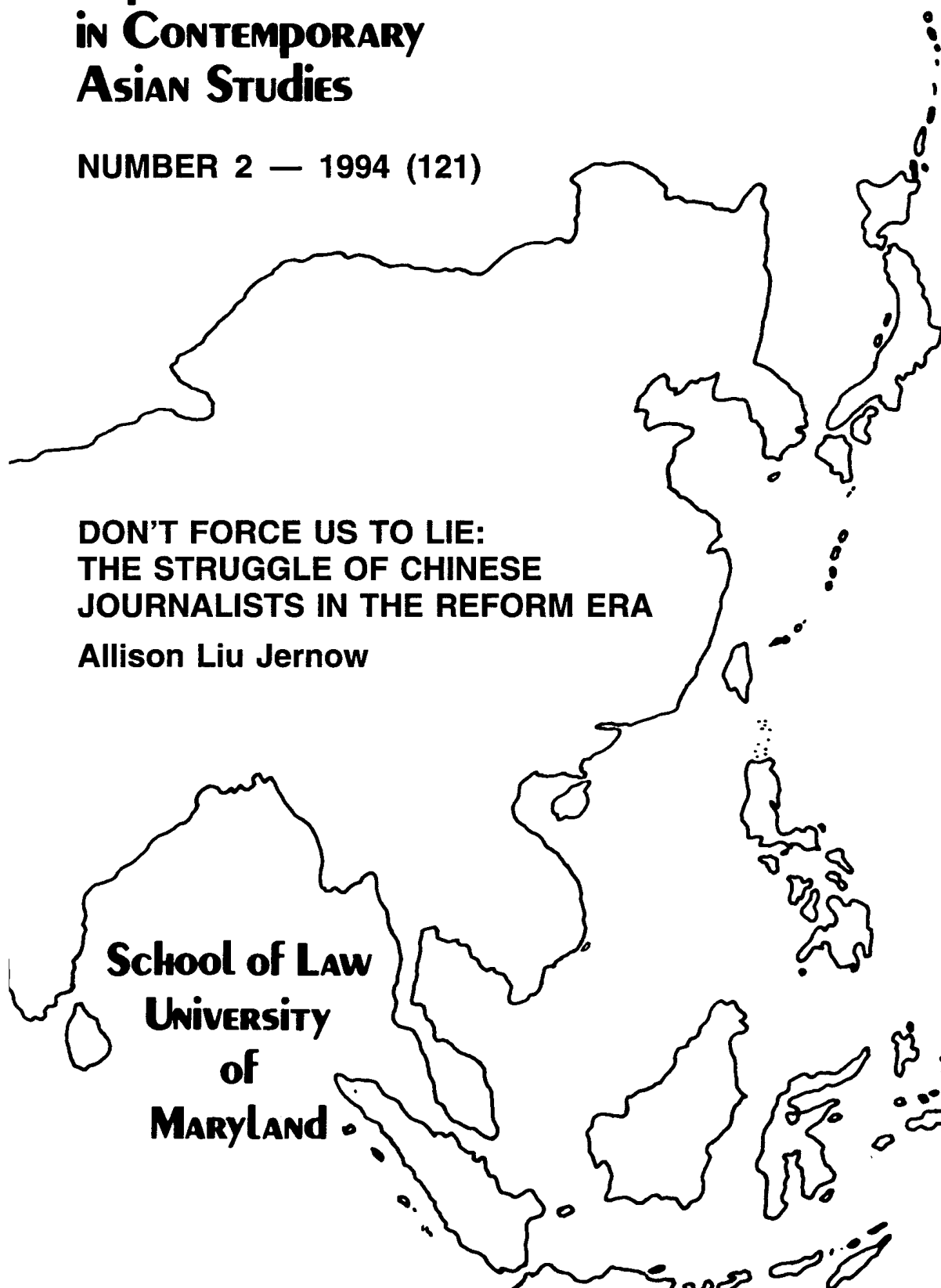
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**DON'T FORCE US TO LIE:
THE STRUGGLE OF CHINESE
JOURNALISTS IN THE REFORM ERA**

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University
of
Maryland**



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Allison Liu Jernow

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CHAPTER 1

TESTING NEW GROUND IN THE 1980S

Hu Jiwei's Conspiracy

In 1977, when Deng Xiaoping picked Hu Jiwei to be the editor-in-chief of *People's Daily*, China was about to embark on an unprecedented path toward modernization and opening to the outside world after a decade of Maoist insularity. Hu Jiwei, a veteran journalist and Communist Party cadre, seemed a good choice to help fulfill the vision of a bold new China. Six years later, he had been ousted from his position. The story of his fall from grace is common enough among Chinese journalists, but no less tragic for its familiarity.

People's Daily is the one newspaper in China whose bureaucratic rank is equivalent to a ministry. Its editor enjoys the prestige and privileges, and the unique responsibility to the Party, of a minister — known in Chinese as *dangxing*. *People's Daily* is the oracle of Zhongnanhai, the compound in Beijing where China's highest leaders live and work. Many of the newspaper's front page commentaries are written in Zhongnanhai and then are reprinted by other papers and broadcast by radio and television stations, so the voice of *People's Daily* literally reverberates throughout the country.

Hu Jiwei was not only a member of the Communist Party and editor-in-chief of the Party's most influential newspaper, he was a *zhishifenzi*, a word that translates as "intellectual" but carries much more weight. In Chinese tradition, *zhishifenzi* assume responsibility for the fate of the country. Lacking the checks and balances of parliamentary systems, China depends on its intellectuals to keep the rulers aware of the people's needs. Intellectual dissent is presumed to be loyal and not rebellious.

Hu Jiwei's *dangxing*, his sense of Party fealty, was strong, but he felt his first responsibility was to China. In the early 1950s, the "golden years" of Communist rule, the Party seemed to serve the people. Then the Party began to turn on those who had helped bring it to power. In 1957, Chairman Mao launched the Anti-Rightist Campaign, primarily targeting the same intellectuals whom he had earlier encouraged to speak their minds. Declared rightists,

they were sent to re-education camps in the countryside. Next came the Great Leap Forward, a drive to modernize China overnight, which resulted in three years of famine and the starvation of at least twenty million people, a disaster that went unreported in the press. The violent ideological warfare of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution of 1966-76 followed, and many Chinese finally lost faith in the Party.

By the time Hu Jiwei became editor of *People's Daily*, he was all too aware that the Party made mistakes. His patriotism and his Party loyalty were no longer synonymous, and he was forced to choose. *People's Daily*, Hu Jiwei decided, had to live up to its name. It had to reflect not only the policies of the Party, but also the will of the people. Luckily for him, the moment was ripe.

The early 1980s was a time of sweeping economic and political change. Under Hu Jiwei's leadership, *People's Daily* published some of the best investigative journalism China had ever seen. An expose on the sinking of the Bohai oil rig led to the resignation of the Minister of Petroleum. Other articles revealed that the model people's commune of Dazhai was in fact not such an exemplar and that the Minister of Commerce dined out at public expense. In 1982, at the apogee of his career, Hu Jiwei delivered a speech in which he called on newspaper editors to publish the opinions and criticisms of their readers.¹

Hu Jiwei's belief that newspapers should speak for the people was later called his "conspiracy," both by Party bureaucrats who felt threatened by the loss of control and fellow journalists who admired his aims. But his intent was not to replace the Party's voice with his own. He believed the press should offer diverse, even conflicting, thoughts and opinions. He used accepted communist terminology to present the idea, novel in China, of independent journalism.²

Overstepping the boundaries that govern the rules of intellectual dissent carries a high price. In 1983, during the Anti-Spiritual Pollution Campaign, Hu Jiwei was forced to resign. *People's Daily* staff members refused to endorse the new campaign, and many edi-

1. Liang Heng and Judith Shapiro, *Intellectual Freedom in China after Mao*, New York: Fund for Free Expression, 1984, pp. 175-176.

2. Hu Yaobang, then secretary-general of the Chinese Communist Party, presented the conventional communist view of the press in 1985: "Our people's basic interests are one; the Central Committee represents the interests of the people, so on these basic questions the unity of everyone's voice is necessary and natural and to express different voices would be unnatural."

torials were written instead by the conservative Deng Liqun, the head of the Propaganda Department.³

Hu Jiwei, sidelined from the paper but still a member of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, became an even more outspoken advocate for press freedom. He led the debate about the need to reform journalism and in the mid-1980s was charged with drafting a press law. He frankly told foreign correspondents that he wanted a law to protect the freedom of the press.⁴

Meanwhile, other journalists at *People's Daily* carried on Hu Jiwei's tradition, and many met with a similar fate. Wang Ruoshui, a Marxist philosopher and deputy editor-in-chief, wrote editorials that denounced Mao's personality cult. He too was purged from the paper in 1983. Liu Binyan, the reporter whose exposes of corruption and official abuse made his name a household word in China, was expelled from the Party in early 1987.

In one of the last articles he wrote for a mainland newspaper, Hu Jiwei said, "Freedom of the press for citizens is their right to be kept informed as masters of the house, their right of political consultation, their right of involvement in the government, and their right of supervision."⁵ After the June crackdown, Hu Jiwei was ostracized and publicly denounced. In August 1989, one newspaper accused him of taking press freedom to mean "the freedom to oppose the Four Basic Principles," which include upholding the socialist system and the leadership of the Communist Party.⁶ He was stripped of his position as a member of the Standing Committee and only narrowly escaped being expelled from the Party. For now, his voice has been silenced, but his ideas are very much in the minds of China's journalists.

Asked why his colleagues risked their careers, even their lives, to take to the streets in the spring of 1989, a *People's Daily* editor, recently retired and now living in the United States, replied, "Since the end of the Cultural Revolution," he said, "we've stood at the front of the reform movement. During 1989, the whole staff thought that supporting the movement was in the highest interests of the

3. Wu Guoguang, in a paper provided to CPJ entitled, "Command Communication: The Politics of Editorial Formulation in the *People's Daily*," pp. 13-14.

4. Marlowe Hood, "Effects of Press Law Reform on Media Viewed," *South China Morning Post*, April 24, 1988, p. 4.

5. *World Economic Herald*, May 8, 1989, p. 3.

6. Xu Renzhong, "Hu Jiwei's Launching the Attack and His Two Whichever Theory," *Economic Reference (Jingji Cankao)*, August 30, 1989, p. 1.

people. That was a very big step for *People's Daily* — to be not only an organ of the Party but to express the people's interests and desires."

One vivid image from those demonstrations is that of Chinese journalists marching beneath a *People's Daily* banner, holding a sign that says, "Oppose the April 26th editorial!" That infamous editorial, supposedly written by Deng Xiaoping himself, accused protesters of undermining stability and creating turmoil. It had been published over the objections of the staff. *People's Daily* journalists had once again been forced to serve the Party, and they wanted people to know that they were not free to speak as they chose.

Journalists in China must live daily with the contradiction between speaking for the Party and speaking, in a plurality of voices, for the people. It is an acute and deeply felt tension. "What we must write we cannot write; what we want to say we cannot say," is a common saying that captures the feelings of many. Journalists carry the weight of the government's demands, the people's expectations, and their own professional consciences. Such an occupation is fraught with hazards, and offers few rewards.

Journalists Work for the Government

Efforts by Hu Jiwei and others to loosen government and Communist Party control of the press have proceeded unevenly. The Chinese state exerts its authority in a variety of ways, and journalists have developed almost as many means of resistance. Nevertheless, state supervision remains pervasive and effective.

In urban China, almost all social services — housing, residency permits, medical and day care, food coupons, and education — are allotted through the work unit. Permission to transfer jobs, marry, divorce, or have children is also granted by work unit supervisors. The employee of a large work unit lives in the unit's apartment building or dormitory, eats in its cafeteria and goes to its clinic when sick. The leader of a work unit has a wide array of "rights" to interfere with employees' private lives. This person is almost always a member of the Communist Party, and there is a Party secretary in each unit with great influence over management.⁷

The intrusive nature of the work unit system is important to keep in mind when considering the potential independence of Chi-

7. Perry Link, *Evening Chats in Beijing: Probing China's Predicament*, New York: W. W. Norton, 1992, pp. 61 - 70.

nese journalists. Despite the recent expansion of the private sector, news organizations remain state organs, and, like other work units, they are part of the government apparatus. None is independent. One reporter at a major daily newspaper describes how it works: "It's true there is no formal censorship system, but the Party . . . does control newspapers. They control through personnel changes. If you're fired, you lose your housing, your privileges, [and] everything."

Television and radio stations fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Radio, Film and Television, which answers to the Central Propaganda Department of the Communist Party.⁸ Party organizations at various levels and of various types own and manage newspapers. Every provincial and municipal Communist Party committee has a newspaper, and sometimes more than one. For example, the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee publishes *Liberation Daily* and the Guangzhou Municipal Party Committee puts out *Southern Daily*. These committees provide funding, appoint staff, and establish editorial policy.

Newspapers are also published by government agencies, trade groups, and political organizations. The Ministry of Culture, the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce, the Communist Youth League, the State Council Science and Technology Commission, and the People's Liberation Army all publish papers that are a part of the mainstream press. Party propaganda departments at the municipal, provincial and central levels oversee their work.⁹

Except in times of extreme repression, control is rarely overt. Proofs of articles are not regularly sent to a government censor for pre-publication approval as they are in some countries. Instead, censorship is embedded in the entire process of producing a news story, from the assignment and writing of it to the editing and layout. An article on a sensitive subject might be shown to the local Party chief for review, but critical articles are not likely to be written at all. Self-censorship, not censorship, is the norm.

8. Zhang Xiaogang, in a paper provided to CPJ entitled, "The Chinese Media: Structure, Function, and Control," March 1992.

9. A third kind of newspaper is internal reference. Marked by varying degrees of confidentiality, the highest is circulated only among top Party officials and the lowest is available to almost any member of a work unit. These internal papers present fairly straightforward digests of foreign news and reports on topics considered too sensitive for general consumption. Most of the articles are written by journalists who work in the public media.

The system works, explained a deputy director of one paper's editorial department, "because the Party and state own the means of production and Party cadres control the daily business of news organizations. The party has 'branch-out' committees in practically all news organizations. . . [to] closely monitor personnel and to recruit new staffers. . . . The political and administrative staff is often much larger than the editorial staff."¹⁰

Propaganda departments hold regular meetings for newspaper editors and issue bulletins that do not so much proscribe topics as suggest what should be emphasized. Consistency is also enforced by reducing the number of officially sanctioned sources. Rather than writing their own stories and risk errors of judgment on delicate subjects, newspapers often recycle stories from *People's Daily* and Xinhua, the government news agency. Reprinting of important policy editorials is mandatory. In times of crisis, the Propaganda Department of the Central Committee will instruct all newspapers to use the Xinhua version. Newspapers thus display a united propaganda front.

Flexible control mechanisms make the press responsive to political realignments. Instead of defining limits in advance, Party committees prefer to discipline those who cross invisible lines. Such arbitrary and sometimes retroactive punishment requires journalists to develop acute political antennae and a sense of caution. Not surprisingly, informal censorship makes for a very nervous newsroom.

Cycles of Repression

In 1978, a newly rehabilitated Deng Xiaoping directed China away from the class struggle of the Cultural Revolution and toward modernization. The press began to change, too. Reflecting the permissive attitude at the top, *People's Daily*, the flagship publication of the Chinese Communist Party, became a trailblazer. Investigative reporter Liu Binyan recalls the excitement of the period and says that "readers enjoyed *People's Daily* more than ever" as circulation rose to a height of seven million.¹¹

In the fall of 1983, the political winds shifted. A leftist-backed movement to "eradicate spiritual pollution" was launched in October with a commentary in *People's Daily* targeting those who "mis-

10. *Id.*, p. 5.

11. Liu Binyan, "Press Freedom: Particles in the Air," in Chin-Chuan Lee, ed., *Voices of China: The Interplay of Politics and Journalism*, New York: Guilford Press, 1990, p. 135.

trust socialism.”¹² The campaign, although brief, caused heads to roll, and press reformers lost crucial ground.

One reason the Anti-Spiritual Pollution Campaign died quickly was that memories of the Cultural Revolution were still fresh in the minds of Party leaders. They did not want to re-ignite ideological witch hunts, purges, and violence. When the political sloganeering and public denouncements began to threaten Deng’s economic reforms, the hardliners retreated. By February 1984, Liu Binyan was able to publish his famous article, “People or Monsters?” about a Party cadre’s gross abuse of power in Heilongjiang Province.¹³

A twice-purged journalist and Party member who had spent years in internal exile, Liu Binyan gained fame writing about the long-neglected grievances of common people. Petitioning Liu Binyan and other reporters was a means by which victims of various wrongs could achieve some form of redress. Lacking direct access to those in power, people sought to use the press to reach their rulers. Indeed, one of the duties of newspapers was to forward complaints to appropriate officials, and journalists took the liberty of publishing readers’ letters on injustices that they could not directly address themselves.

In October 1985, Liu Binyan wrote “A Second Kind of Loyalty,” about one of his petitioners, an unrepentant dissident named Ni Yuxian. In the article, he supported the right to “espouse political opinions that differed from the Party or Mao.”¹⁴ The article was considered too inflammatory for *People’s Daily*, and he published it instead in a new magazine called *Kaituo*. A few months later, when the political atmosphere changed once again, both author and magazine were severely criticized. *Kaituo* folded, and in January 1987 Liu Binyan was expelled from the Party.¹⁵

This second wave of repression was in response to student demonstrations that broke out in Shanghai, Beijing, and other cities in December 1986. Party leaders feared a return to the ideology-driven tumult of the Cultural Revolution, but they also regarded with dread any hint of popular discontent. The movement against “bourgeois liberalization” was launched. Hu Yaobang, secretary-general of the Chinese Communist Party and one of Liu Binyan’s political sponsors, was forced to retire. Also ousted from their posi-

12. Liang and Shapiro, *supra* note 1, p. 30.

13. *Id.*, p. 169.

14. Liu Binyan, *supra* note 9, p. 133.

15. Anne Thurston, *A Chinese Odyssey: The Life and Times of a Chinese Dissident*, New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1991, p. 381.

tions were the writer Wang Ruowang and the scientist Fang Lizhi, both outspoken reformers, and Propaganda Minister Zhu Houze, who was regarded as a liberal.

On January 25, 1987, *People's Daily* reported that "as a result of Liu Binyan's serious errors, the Disciplinary Inspection Committee of the *People's Daily* Branch of the Chinese Communist Party came to a decision to strip Liu Binyan. . . of his Party membership. . . . He has often. . . opposed the Four Basic Principles and encouraged bourgeois liberalization." A commentary the same day said Liu Binyan had done "his utmost to vilify and oppose the leadership of the Party."¹⁶

Sun Changjiang, the progressive deputy editor of the new *Science and Technology Daily*, almost lost his job during the 1987 campaign. A former speech writer for Hu Yaobang, he had remained close to his old boss. Severe restrictions on news coverage were imposed, and the list of sensitive subjects grew. "At the time, the paper was controlled quite tightly. Soviet reporting in particular was controlled. The international section was not allowed to write anything on reform in the Soviet Union," recalled a *Science and Technology Daily* reporter.

One of the more intrepid enterprises on the Chinese news scene, *Shenzhen Youth News*, was closed in the winter of 1987. Due to its location in a special economic zone adjacent to the free-wheeling colony of Hong Kong and the relative laxity of its publisher, the local Communist Youth League, *Shenzhen Youth News* had been able to publish pieces that other papers would not have dared. Liu Binyan, Wang Ruowang, and Fang Lizhi all appeared in its pages, as did political theorist Yan Jiaqi and literary critic Liu Xiaobo. The deputy editor-in-chief, Cao Changqing, who was responsible for checking articles prior to publication, explained, "I knew that some articles written independently by reporters would get us into trouble with propaganda policy. They were about topics like prostitution [that were] not very important but if published would create problems. I preferred to publish political articles instead. They were all dangerous, but I would rather choose the second kind of danger."

In an infamous front-page essay on October 21, 1986, *Shenzhen Youth News* called on Deng Xiaoping to retire, ostensibly because of Deng's comments on the need for older leaders to make

16. Geremie Barme and John Minford, eds., *Seeds of Fire: Chinese Voices of Conscience*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1989, p. 358.

room for rising young cadres. "The Propaganda Department had never mentioned whether or not we could publish on this subject," Cao said. "We knew it would be dangerous, but they hadn't specifically forbidden it. If they asked, we would say, 'You didn't mention this, so we didn't know. Next time, we won't publish this kind of article.'"

The paper might have gotten away with Cao's disingenuous defense, but then students began demonstrating and the Party went hunting for scapegoats. In January 1987, a Party "work team" arrived at the paper's offices to clear out any bourgeois elements. Cao spent the next six months writing and re-writing a "self-criticism," explaining his political errors to the work team's satisfaction. *Shenzhen Youth News* was closed for "advocating bourgeois liberalization and committing the serious mistake of taking the wrong political direction." The editor of the newspaper now works in an import-export company on Hainan Island, off the coast of southern China.

Most journalists fought the new political campaign with passive resistance. Instead of writing what they did not believe, they refused to write at all. Wu Guoguang, an editor at *People's Daily*, recalls the fine art of stalling. When writers in his Commentary Department received propaganda directives they disliked, they delayed action on them for as long as possible. During the Anti-Bourgeois Liberalization Campaign of 1986-87, rather than writing their own editorials, the editors reprinted ones from other newspapers.

"We refused a lot of editorial directives. . . . I remember the editorial criticizing Fang Lizhi was reprinted from the *Anhui Daily*. It wasn't written by *People's Daily* staff, and this is an important distinction. . . . We had to publish something, but we didn't want to write it ourselves. . . . The ordinary people didn't care whether *People's Daily* wrote its own articles or reprinted others. . . . But I think intellectuals knew better; they knew when we had written things ourselves and when we hadn't."

Journalists working for mainstream news organizations were able to get their most daring articles published in the more progressive periodicals. The development of a new style of writing, called *baogao wenxue*, "literary reportage," allowed journalists greater latitude. The closest American example is the writing of John McPhee in which the story is true, but the material is presented in a fictional format. A journalist who was an editor for *Hainan Reportage*, explained, "Many officials just don't have the time to read long

articles. Sometimes opinions are buried deep inside long articles and officials don't discover them." Some of the most influential magazines of this genre were *Literary Reportage*, *Hainan Reportage*, and *Golden Island*, all of which were closed after the crack-down in 1989.

Not every independent-minded journalist approved of literary reportage. A *China Daily* journalist rejected the subterfuge involved, preferring instead to write for more outspoken publications in the mainstream press. He sought liberal venues, such as the *World Economic Herald* and *China Youth News*, because he believed in treating news as news and not re-casting it as fiction. Wu Guoguang recalled that in 1986, he wrote more than twice as many pieces for outside publications as for his own newspaper. One article about "liberating our mouths" was published in *New Observer* after *People's Daily* refused. Wu's name then turned up on a Propaganda Department list of writers considered too liberal, but the growing number of specialized publications made Party control over every outlet of expression more difficult.

Thinking as Independent Agents

Press freedom suffered setbacks during the Anti-Bourgeois Liberalization Drive, but a process of internal transformation had begun among journalists. Having had a chance to speak and write with more autonomy, they began to see themselves as independent agents, something more than Party puppets. Throughout the 1980s, journalists discussed the need for press reform — a topic that never would have been broached before — in seminars and study groups. The debate even took place in the pages of *News Front*, a journal devoted to analyzing the profession.

A new generation of journalists was at work. These were people who had been schooled in programs like that of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of Journalism, which emphasized professionalism, not propaganda.¹⁷ Their teachers included Liu Binyan, Hu Jiwei, and Wang Ruoshui — senior journalists who believed in an independent press and were trying to figure out how best to achieve it. Young journalists also had increasing exposure to the West, as the number of exchange students multiplied and as foreign news, films and literature became more accessible. They often knew journalists from the West and from Hong Kong, and

17. Chen Mo, "The Thin Red Line: Paradoxical Press Role Haunts Class of '85," in *Far Eastern Economic Review*, August 29, 1991, pp. 30-31.

they learned by example. No longer creatures of the Party, they strained against the controls the Party imposed.

In October 1987, journalists detected yet another warming trend. Zhao Ziyang, who had replaced Hu Yaobang as secretary-general of the Chinese Communist Party, told the 13th Party Congress that public opinion was needed to supervise public officials, and he specifically encouraged critical reporting. Zhao said the public should know about important events and debate important topics. Chinese journalists responded enthusiastically.

The late 1980s saw a rise in investigative, analytical and independent reporting. Articles and journalists were criticized from time to time, and more libel cases were being filed, but openness prevailed. This was due in part to the protection of reformers like Zhao Ziyang high in the Party structure. Debate on the need for a press law, and the form that law would take, became more public and more heated. Newspapers like the *World Economic Herald* and the *Asia-Pacific Economic Times* grew increasingly bold. In 1988 Chen Ziming and Wang Juntao, two independent social scientists, took over *Economics Weekly*. As these papers reported on China's uneven steps towards a market economy, they inevitably covered political and social affairs as well. They became widely read forums for opinions about reform, and they served as an inspiration and model for other publications.

When the protest movement began in the spring of 1989, China's journalists had come too far down the road toward independence to beat a hasty retreat. They had too much at stake: their own autonomy and editorial integrity, and their desire to report history in the making. The student demonstrations challenged them to become the kind of journalists they had always wanted to be.

CHAPTER 2

DEATH OF A NEWSPAPER

A Case Study of the World Economic Herald

Weeks before the Tiananmen Square massacre and the near total repression that followed, a Shanghai newspaper known as a strong advocate for economic and political change was forced to shut down. The rise and fall of the *World Economic Herald* paralleled the trajectory of reform in the 1980s.

Xinhua, the official news agency of China, published a lengthy diatribe after the 1989 crackdown entitled, "The Truth About the *World Economic Herald*." It accused the paper of advocating bourgeois liberalization and opposing the central tenets of socialism under "the guise of so-called 'freedom of the press.'" After several pages of invective, the article concluded with this "lesson" to be drawn from the *Herald*:

[T]he struggle against a handful of persons in the *Herald*. . . was not a struggle over the question of whether it is necessary to reform journalism or not. It was an intense struggle between upholding the Four Basic Principles and upholding bourgeois liberalization, as well as a political struggle between creating turmoil and opposing turmoil. It also tells the people that, in our country, the mass media will inevitably fall into the quagmire of bourgeois liberalization if it breaks away from our Party leadership and deviates from the socialist orientation. The reform of journalism, if it violates the precondition of upholding the Four Basic Principles, will surely result in rampant bourgeois liberalization. This is independent of man's subjective will.¹

Both the journalists who worked at the *Herald* and the members of the Shanghai Party Committee who forced it to close would agree that there was a Faustian struggle over the soul of the newspaper. But the journalists have their side of the story to tell, one

1. Xin Huashi, "The Truth about the Case of *Shijie Jingji Daobao*," Xinhua, August 18, 1989, translation in FBIS-CHI-89-160, August 21, 1989, pp. 22-27.

that was not represented in the Xinhua report, and one that has been heard by few of their colleagues or countrymen.²

The Shanghai Party boss who orchestrated the attack on the *Herald*, Jiang Zemin, is now secretary-general of the Chinese Communist Party. As for the journalists, most of them can no longer work in the field. All of them have suffered political persecution. Some were imprisoned, others re-assigned to meaningless jobs. Those who could do so have left the country. To listen to their story is to understand the tragedy of reformers in a system that views change as threat and individuality as sedition.

Learning to Hit Line Balls

The *World Economic Herald* was founded in 1980, as China was emerging from the chaos of the Cultural Revolution. Qin Benli, a veteran journalist and high-ranking Party cadre, wanted to create a newspaper that would reflect China's new orientation, and two institutions, the Chinese World Economists' Association and the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, agreed to be joint publishers.

Qin Benli was not radical by nature. Like many steadfast Party members, he had been victimized in a series of purges during the long reign of Mao Zedong. In the 1950s, as an editor at Shanghai's *Wenhui Daily*, he was targeted during the Anti-Rightist campaign. A decade later, during the Cultural Revolution, he was "sent down" to work and live in the countryside for seven years.³ Despite these tests of faith, Qin was still someone who worked within the system. Like Hu Jiwei, he came from the long Chinese tradition of loyal intellectual dissent. All of China's dynasties had these voices of conscience, courtiers who were usually exiled to distant provinces during imperial fits of pique.

One *Herald* journalist recalls a conversation with Qin Benli in which she told him she was infuriated with the Communist Party

2. This chapter is largely based on interviews conducted in the United States and China with the following *Herald* journalists: Chen Danhong, Chen Lebo, Fan Jun, Fan Yisheng, Fei Xiaodong, Liu Lingwu, Lu Yi, Ruan Jiangning, Xu Xiaowei, Zhang Weiguo, and Zhu Xingqing. The author is grateful to them for sharing their stories. Where details of this chapter differ from accounts published elsewhere, the author has relied primarily on these first-hand sources.

3. Mark O'Neill, "Veteran China Editor Survives Mao, Purges, Pig Pen," Reuters, March 23, 1989; Bill Keller, "Shanghai Editor Now a Rallying Cry," *The New York Times*, May 19, 1989, p. 8; Hsiao Ching-Chang and Yang Mei-Rong, "Don't Force Us To Lie: The Case of the World Economic Herald," in Chin-Chuan Lee, ed., *Voices of China: The Interplay of Politics and Journalism*, New York: The Guilford Press, 1990, p. 115.

and wanted to get rid of it. Qin sympathized, but he told her, "You cannot not want it. You are in China and you have no other method. To do something is better than to do nothing. You must support the good ideas within the Party." For Qin, the Party was still China's only hope.

Qin founded the *Herald* to cover international economics for Chinese readers. Gradually, recalls Zhu Xingqing, the paper's deputy editor-in-chief, Qin realized that domestic affairs had to be reported, too, and linked to what was happening elsewhere. Started as a biweekly, the *Herald* became a weekly in 1981 and eventually developed a readership of 300,000, mostly among influential intellectuals and government leaders.⁴

Qin's favorite description of the paper's bold style was "hitting line balls." If a ping-pong ball lands on the white line, it's in — just barely. Landing a story on the line between what's politically permissible and what's out of bounds takes great skill. Although it ran hard news on economic matters, the *Herald* was perhaps most innovative in its opinion and commentary pieces. At its best, it was a public forum for lively debate about China's future.

Herald writers and editors were dedicated, intelligent, and eager to take risks. They were able to evade strict Party control because of the *Herald's* unique position in China's media command structure — which made the question of who had ultimate authority highly ambiguous — and because of Qin's long-term relationships with powerful reformers, including members of then Secretary-General Zhao Ziyang's influential think tanks. Two of Qin's close friends were on the *Herald's* board of governors — Qian Junrui, chair of the China World Economists Association, and Huan Xiang, a former ambassador to Great Britain — and they acted as political shields.

The *Herald* was published by the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences and the Chinese World Economists Association, whereas most newspapers in China are sponsored by only one organization, usually a local Communist Party committee. Neither publisher had much influence over the *Herald's* content. The paper was independent of government subsidies and relied on advertising and subscribers for financial support. Although based in Shanghai, it did not report on city affairs.

4. Hsiao Ching-Chang and Yang Mei-Rong, *id.*, p. 115; Nicholas D. Kristof, "At the Cutting Edge of China's New Journalism," *The New York Times*, January 16, 1989, p. 12.

"There were two ways of thinking about the *Herald*," explains Zhang Weiguo, the former Beijing bureau chief. "The Central Propaganda Department said that it was a local paper and therefore was Shanghai's responsibility. Shanghai said that since the content did not concern Shanghai, Beijing should manage it. . . . This is why we had more freedom than other papers. We fell between the cracks of the system."

The paper's scope evolved from purely economic affairs to cultural and social issues, and eventually grew to encompass politics. Economic reform, its editors understood, could not proceed without changes in the political system. Chen Danhong, deputy director of the International Economics Department and one of the *Herald's* few female journalists, said that Qin Benli was at first reluctant to publish articles delving too heavily into politics. Although he supported political liberalization, he also had first-hand experience with political trouble. "He loved this paper," she says. "He was always thinking about the *Herald's* future. If it was too dangerous, he didn't want to do it."

Qin came to change his viewpoint for two reasons, according to Chen: Many of the *Herald's* younger journalists pressured Qin to adopt a more radical stance, and Qin received word from above, most likely from someone affiliated with Zhao Ziyang, that it was okay to promote political reform.

Beijing bureau Deputy Director Ruan Jiangning, who joined the *Herald* even though he was told by a former employer that the paper had serious political problems, penned one of the earliest pieces on political reform in 1984. At that time, Ruan remembers, "We had economic reform but no political reform. I said that without political reform, economic reform could not continue." The article was criticized by propaganda officials.

In 1987, Ruan wrote about *glasnost* in the Soviet Union. He quoted Gorbachev as saying, "We need democracy like we need air. If we do not understand it, or if we do but do not enlarge it, we prevent people from participating in reform."⁵ Hu Qiaomu, a leftist Party theoretician and then a member of the Central Advisory Committee, said the article was an attack on China, but Zhao Ziyang came to the *Herald's* rescue. "Zhao said that the Soviet Union was a foreign problem, not a domestic problem or a political comment," says Ruan.

5. Ruan Jiangning, "The Reform Hurricane is Blowing From the Kremlin," *World Economic Herald*, February 23, 1987, p. 1. Translated by Liu Lingwu.

During the Anti-Bourgeois Liberalization Campaign of 1986-87, a work team was sent to investigate and correct the *Herald's* attitude. "They came to our offices and for a whole day talked about Mao Zedong Thought," says Chen Danhong. "We told them, 'the Cultural Revolution is over.' We made fun of them." The staff's irreverence was not taken lightly. Afterward, the leader of the work team sent a report via the Shanghai Party Committee to Hu Qiaomu, who then showed it to Zhao Ziyang. The report claimed the *Herald* was pursuing a "bourgeois liberal" line. According to Chen, Zhao once again intervened on the *Herald's* behalf.

Chen and her colleagues do not consider the *Herald* to have been a "Zhao-faction paper," as the hardliners later charged. Qin Benli was a patriot, she says. "This was Qin's paper. He wanted to do what was good for China. He decided that reform, which Zhao advocated, was what was best."

Once Qin knew he had the support of Zhao, he became less cautious about political reform. The *Herald* began featuring interviews with leading liberal economists and scholars. The connection between economic advancement and political reform were obvious to the *Herald* staff, and they wanted readers to understand the interdependence of the two. One article, written in 1987 by Chen Yizi, then director of the Party Central Institute for Reform of the Economic System, said, "It is becoming clear that the combination of Party administration and high centralization no longer fits our needs. . . . The key point here is to separate the Party from the government. The Party should not involve itself in any governmental affairs."⁶

Throughout 1987 and 1988, the *Herald* continued to argue for the separation of Party and government, rule by law, representative and participatory politics, and China's membership in a global community of nations. A prophetic piece in July 1988 argued for the "re-recognition" of free market capitalism as a workable system.⁷

Not surprisingly, the *Herald* often landed in hot water despite high-level support. Beijing Bureau Chief Zhang Weiguo says, "Every time the *Herald* published an article that pushed the line a little bit, we would have to write self-criticisms. We wrote them so often that they were like receipts for introducing new ideas." Most

6. Chen Yizi, "Political Reform is the Guarantee of Economic Reform," *World Economic Herald*, July 13, 1987, p. 1. Translated by Liu Lingwu.

7. Wang Yizhou, "Re-recognize Capitalism," *World Economic Herald*, July 18, 1988, p. 13. Translated by Liu Lingwu.

self-criticisms were minor, viewed by the staff as a kind of polite custom in a Communist dance of manners. According to Zhang, sometimes Qian Junrui, one of the paper's patrons, would write a self-criticism instead of Qin Benli and blame himself for failure to advise the paper correctly.

A speech by reform-minded Marxist scholar Su Shaozhi in late December 1988 created some of the most serious difficulties for the paper. At a theoretical conference commemorating the tenth anniversary of the Central Committee's historic Third Plenum, Su criticized the meeting's failure to address the two major ideological purges of the 1980s: The Anti-Spiritual Pollution campaign of 1983 and Anti-Bourgeois Liberalization campaign of 1986-87. Reporters at the conference recognized Su's speech as historic, but their papers were told not to publish it. Qin Benli, however, decided that since the *Herald* was not an organ of the Communist Party, he would run the speech. The *Herald* was the only paper that did so.

Reprinting key articles from other publications is common in China, and an editor at another newspaper in Beijing recalls that shortly after this issue of the *Herald* arrived in his office, he got a phone call from the Central Propaganda Department ordering him not to reprint Su's article. He complied, as did all the other newspapers. The *Herald* was criticized, but once again it had pushed the edge.

By 1988, economic reforms appeared stalled. To people at the *Herald*, it was clear that lack of political change was the real impediment. The *Herald's* articles grew bolder. Contributors wrote pieces calling for greater transparency and accountability in government, market-oriented economic reform, and freedom of expression.⁸

In early April 1989, the *Herald* published one of its most direct appeals for political change. "Historical human experience shows that absolute power leads to absolute corruption," wrote Wen Yuankai, a professor at the University of Science and Technology in Anhui. "Abolish the methods. . .by which dissent is suppressed." The article listed twenty-three necessary steps, including, "Re-think history and tell people the real facts of history," establish a "constitution enforcement committee," directly elect members to the people's congress, guarantee the independence of the judiciary, adopt a

8. For example: Yu Haocheng, "The Construction of the Legal System and Political System Reforms," *World Economic Herald*, January 11, 1988, p. 12 (translated by Liu Lingwu); Wen Yuankai, Wang Kang, and Xiang Hong, "Preliminary Ideas about China's Reforms in the Next Decade," *World Economic Herald*, April 10, 1989, p. 10. See also Hsiao Ching-Chang and Yang Mei-Rong, *supra* note 3, p. 119.

pluralistic political system, “abolish the system of personnel files and residence registration,” and “protect human rights.”⁹ Many of these ideas were the foundation of the protest movement later that spring; they were also taken by hardline leftist leaders as proof that the *Herald* was guilty of creating turmoil.

“Comrade Yaobang Lives in Our Hearts”

On April 15, 1989, Hu Yaobang died. The former secretary-general of the Chinese Communist Party, a patron of intellectuals, had been ousted during the Anti-Bourgeois Liberalization campaign of 1986-87. In death, he became a powerful symbol for the reform movement.

Mourning in China is often used as a pretext to vent feelings that would otherwise go unexpressed — in this case, mounting dissatisfaction with the regime. In a striking re-enactment of the April Fifth Incident following the death of Zhou Enlai 13 years earlier, people gathered in Tiananmen Square to lay wreaths and write poems memorializing Hu Yaobang. Many felt that the wrong person, the one they had trusted and loved, had died, and that they were left with leaders in whom they had little faith. Their grief was a catalyst for the student movement that eventually shook the foundations of the Communist Party and culminated in the June 4 massacre.

In mid-April, however, unrest was still simmering beneath the surface. Upon learning of Hu’s death, Zhang Weiguo immediately called Qin Benli in Shanghai. Zhang had entree to most of the intellectual circles in the capital and was heavily relied on by his boss as a barometer of the political climate. The two men decided against asking prominent intellectuals to write articles commemorating Hu, a custom following the death of a high-ranking official. They felt that since the *Herald* was a weekly, most testimonials would already have been published by the time their paper went to press.

Nevertheless, the *Herald* staff did see Hu’s death as a significant opportunity to advance political reform. “It was a chance to push things forward that you couldn’t take under ordinary circumstances,” says Zhang. “The reforms at that point were already in jeopardy. [Premier] Li Peng had given a very hardline speech and Zhao Ziyang was already in trouble. This was an opportunity to allow intellectuals to put forth their reformist opinions.”

9. Wen Yuankai, et al., “Preliminary Ideas,” *id.*

Zhang and Qin decided to organize a symposium in honor of Hu Yaobang. The comments of participants could then be transcribed and shaped into an article tailored to the *Herald's* views. On Wednesday, April 19, the "Comrade Yaobang Lives in Our Hearts" seminar, hosted by the *Herald* and the magazine *New Observer* was held at the Ministry of Culture. It lasted seven hours. As Zhang recalls, "I invited the younger and mid-level intellectuals. Ge Yang [editor-in-chief of *New Observer*] invited the senior people. Together, there were over 50 participants."

Many noted journalists, authors, and politicians attended, including Hu Yaobang's son Hu Deping, Su Shaozhi, *Guangming Daily* reporter Dai Qing, *Science and Technology Daily* editor Sun Changjiang, Mao's former secretary Li Rui, legal theorist and publisher Yu Haocheng, *People's Daily* editor Hu Jiwei, and former Shanghai propaganda chief Pan Weiming.¹⁰ One theme was that Hu Yaobang had been purged unjustly, and that both his fall from power and the Anti-Bourgeois Liberalization campaign of 1986-87 should be re-evaluated by the Party. Dai Qing called Hu's dismissal a "non-procedural transfer of power." Political scientist Yan Jiaqi commented, "Those people who were in charge of ideological matters then have no right to mourn Hu Yaobang's death because they trapped him. They will receive the judgment of history."¹¹

In condemning Hu's ouster and rejecting the Party's verdict on the major ideological battles of the 1980s, the symposium's participants were treading on delicate ground. They had issued a challenge to the Party's authority, questioning its mandate to rule. Attempting to publish such opinions was risky. "The staff was all scared, but we knew we had to go ahead with it," says Lu Yi, who was head of the Prime News Department. "There's an invisible and always shifting line that divides what's appropriate from what's not. You may know when you're crossing that line, but you don't always know what the punishment will be."

With so much material to work with, Zhang worried that the article would be too long. Qin reassured him, telling him to take as much space as he needed and not to worry about including sensitive

10. Zhang Weiguo, "Uphold Reforms and Open Policy, and Promote Democratic Construction: 'Comrade Yaobang Lives in Our Hearts' Forum Held in Beijing Under Joint Auspices of this Paper and *Xinguan*," *World Economic Herald*, April 24, 1989, p. 1.

11. Translation of Yan Jiaqi's remarks in Geremie Barme and Linda Jaivin, eds., *New Ghosts, Old Dreams: Chinese Rebel Voices*, New York: Times Books, 1992, pp. 39-41.

comments. Zhang wrote more than 30 pages and the next evening, on Thursday, he faxed the piece to the *Herald's* Shanghai office. The final version was due at the printer's on Saturday. Working late into the night, Qin edited Zhang's transcript into an article that would spread over six newspaper pages in the *Herald's* 439th issue.

The Banning of the 439th Issue

The following account, based on extensive interviews with *Herald* staff members, reveals a series of maneuvers and missteps that resulted in the banning of the *Herald's* 439th issue. At each stage, the journalists were not sure whether a single edition of the newspaper, the newspaper itself, or their careers were hanging in the balance.

On Friday afternoon, April 21, Chen Zhili, the head of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee's Propaganda Department, called Qin Benli to her office. She had apparently learned from Hong Kong press reports about the existence of a *Herald* feature that would commemorate Hu Yaobang. It is unclear whether Chen asked to see the article or Qin offered to show it to her, but at any rate he promised to send her a copy before the paper went to press. This was the first time that any *Herald* article had been submitted for pre-publication approval.

The following day, at about 2 p.m., the *Herald* sent a mock-up of the newspaper to Chen Zhili. The staff waited until 5 p.m. and, not receiving any word, decided it was okay to send the paper to the printers. What they didn't know was that student demonstrations in the streets had blocked traffic and delayed the mock-up's arrival at Chen Zhili's office. Long after they thought Chen Zhili had read and approved the paper's contents, her copy of the 439th edition was still en route.

Chen Zhili did not approve. Instead she contacted Jiang Zemin and Zeng Qinghong, the first- and second-in-command of the Shanghai Party Committee. The three Party leaders called Qin Benli and asked him to meet them at their offices on Kanping Road. The substance of their comments was that certain parts of the article commemorating Hu Yaobang, totaling perhaps 1,000 words, would have to be deleted. Statements by Yan Jiaqi that referred to demonstrations in Tiananmen Square as "the will of the people" were considered too inflammatory. Qin Benli argued that the April 19 symposium should be seen in an academic and not a political context. He assured them that if the article had any social

impact, he, as editor-in-chief, would assume full responsibility for the consequences.

Jiang Zemin then got very angry, Qin later told a *Herald* journalist. The Party boss said that although he was younger than Qin and should be deferential, in this case he could not treat the older editor with respect. Qin finally agreed to stop publication, and called Fan Jun, the *Herald's* secretary-general for administration, to tell him.

Late that Saturday night, Fan Jun called other *Herald* editors to Qin Benli's house to discuss the situation. They included Deputy Secretary Xu Xiaowei, Chen Lebo, Lu Yi, Zhu Xingqing and Ruan Jiangning. Qin Benli still had not returned, and several of the editors decided to check what was happening at the printer's, which was located in the building of another newspaper, *Liberation Daily*. They found that one batch of papers had already been printed and sent to the post office for distribution, and that a second batch was waiting in the lobby. On the wall, Xu recalls seeing a sign that read, "We cannot distribute this newspaper until we receive another call from Qin Benli." Xu surmised that Qin, under pressure from Zeng Qinghong and Jiang Zemin, had been forced to call both the printer's and the post office to order them to stop. Xu says, "Qin was a Party member and Zeng, as deputy secretary of the Shanghai Party Committee, was his direct leader. If Zeng says do something, Qin must do it."

After seeing that the paper's printing and distribution had been interrupted, the journalists called Zhang Weiguo and told him the news. They then went back to Qin Benli's two-room apartment on Nanchang Road to discuss the situation with Qin and the other editors. Qin had returned from his meeting with Jiang Zemin weary and disheartened. He briefly relayed what had happened. The journalists admit that they did not then comprehend the gravity of their predicament. They agreed that they did not want to change any part of the 439th edition, but they also decided that if they did have to make alterations, it would be the responsibility of Lu Yi because he was head of Prime News. The meeting lasted until very late and the exhausted journalists went home to bed.

Unbeknownst to them, several hundred copies of the unaltered newspaper were distributed early Sunday morning. Apparently one newspaper vendor had stumbled across the copies accumulated in *Liberation Daily's* lobby and picked them up to sell. The newspaper had also been hand-delivered by the regular newsboy to the homes

of Shanghai's top leaders, including former mayor Wang Daohan, a member of the *Herald's* board of directors.

According to Xu, Wang Daohan called Chen Zhili to inform her of this turn of events. Later, Qin would view Wang's actions as the first of many betrayals by his comrades. Chen, in turn, told Jiang Zemin, who was furious, believing that Qin had deliberately defied his order not to circulate the unedited edition. Another meeting was held at Kanping Road with Qin Benli, Lu Yi, and Zhu Xingqing all in attendance. The Party leaders wanted to suspend the "A" version of the 439th edition from circulation and have the journalists compile edition "B." Qin argued that since the unchanged paper had already been released to the public, and since the foreign press already knew about it, re-issuing it in altered form made no sense.

On Monday, April 24, a reluctant Lu Yi began very slowly to revise the 439th issue. At the same time, Chen Lebo and Xu Xiaowei wrote a brief Urgent Report to the Shanghai Party Committee outlining the reasons for preserving the issue in its original form. Their main point was that the public already knew about the 439th edition, both through unintentional distribution on Sunday morning and through reports in the foreign press. The Hong Kong-based *South China Morning Post* had picked up the story. The editors also argued that banning the issue now could further incite the students. In Beijing, students had mistakenly protested the supposed confiscation of *Science and Technology Daily's* April 23 issue. The Urgent Report from the editors concluded with, "*Zhuan ci feng gao*" — "This is to inform you." Jiang Zemin found the wording particularly impolite because it implied the Party had no say in the matter.

By Tuesday, Qin Benli had left for a guest house on the outskirts of Shanghai. The staff, concerned about the physical and political health of their 71-year-old leader, had persuaded him to rest for a few days. By removing him from the scene, they also hoped to relieve him of some of the responsibility, or blame, that he might bear for their actions.

On April 26, *People's Daily* published its infamous editorial calling on people to "take a clear-cut stand to oppose" the "turmoil" of the student movement. Battle lines hardened. That afternoon, Jiang Zemin held a "ten thousand cadre" meeting and announced that he was suspending Qin Benli from his position and that a work team would be sent to rectify the situation at the *Herald*. Work teams are a peculiar invention of Communist China.

Under the guise of "correcting" the political orientation of the staff, they in fact operate as a sort of judge and jury in identifying ideological crimes. They force confessions and publicly denounce culprits.

With the hardliners apparently prevailing in Beijing, Jiang Zemin seized the opportunity to show that he could deal firmly with the bastion of "bourgeois liberalization," as the *Herald* was later termed. For a brief period in May, when it looked like Zhao Ziyang might win the power struggle against the conservatives, Jiang might have regretted his hastiness. There are even reports that he sought to make amends with Qin Benli.

But the hardliners won, and Jiang was rewarded by being promoted to Party chief of all of China. Jiang had proved to be the ultimate *toujifenzi* (opportunist), and in Chinese the term is not a compliment. The seminar to commemorate Hu Yaobang, held only the week before, must have seemed very distant to the *Herald* journalists by this time. In the space of a few days, what began as a disagreement over a thousand words in an intellectual debate had escalated into full-scale ideological war. Before the dismissal of their editor-in-chief, the journalists may have been prepared, however reluctantly, to compromise. Now they realized that much more than one article was at stake. The fate of the *Herald* would indicate the future of reform in China.

A "Shake-up Task Force" Is Dispatched

On April 27, hundreds of thousands of students took to the streets in Beijing to protest the *People's Daily* hardline editorial of the previous day. Meanwhile, a work team under the direction of Liu Ji, deputy director of the Shanghai Propaganda Department, arrived at the *Herald* and announced that it would publish a newspaper that firmly defended national stability.¹² The work team's other members were Ma Da, the former editor-in-chief of *Wenhui Daily*; Zhang Jiajun, the deputy editor of a Fudan University journal; Yan Jing, a party secretary at the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences; and Sun Henzhi, deputy director of policy research for the Shanghai Party Committee.¹³ Chen Zhili was there as well, and she made the opening speech.

12. "The Truth about the Case of *Shijie Jingji Daobao*," *supra* note 1. Kate Wright, "The Political Fortunes of Shanghai's *World Economic Herald*" in *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, No. 23, January 1990, pp. 121-132.

13. Much to the work team's chagrin, Sun Henzhi later defected to the *Herald's* side and was criticized for it.

Several work team members genuinely hoped to help Qin Benli by brokering a compromise between him and Jiang Zemin. According to one *Herald* reporter, Ma Da spoke with tears in his eyes of his wish to restore his old friend Qin to his position and to help the *Herald* continue to publish. Xu Xiaowei recalls staff reactions:

I was quite impressed that a lot of older staff who did not say anything in regular meetings really said quite a lot against the work team. These were people who had a lot of experience in Chinese newspapers and had seen a lot of political campaigns. They were angry [at] that a new political campaign had come in. And I just broke into tears. These were guys who had been tortured and imprisoned during the Cultural Revolution. They were old friends of Qin's called in by him to help establish this paper. When the work team came in, they spoke out against it.

The work team prepared a "B" edition of the 439th issue. Zhu Xingqing, acting editor-in-chief in Qin's stead, refused to approve the final proofs of the "B" edition, and it was sent to the printer's with the signature of Cai Baihua, a vice-director on the *Herald's* board. Zhu's refusal to sign off on the proofs was later cited as one of his principal errors.

After the arrival of the work team, the *Herald's* top editors held a meeting in the home of Qin Benli, who had returned from his "rest" to news of his dismissal. Opinions were divided. According to Liu Lingwu, some felt that they should continue publishing but "use a zig-zag way: seem to respect the work team's opinions while really using some tricks to fool them." Others held that they "should not be double-faced under a dictatorship," that continuing to publish the paper under the rule of the Shanghai Party Committee would be meaningless. For the time being, it was decided to zig and zag.

Denied permission to publish anything that referred directly to the student demonstrations or their own situation, the journalists nonetheless managed to provide topical and pointed commentary. "The Boom and Bust of China's Reform and the Psychological Forbearance of Reformers Themselves" and "Design for Order in the Process of Democratization," both of which stressed the need for continued political liberalization, appeared in May issues.¹⁴ In the

14. Lin Shangli, "Design for Order in the Process of Democratization," *World Economic Herald*, May 1, 1989, p. 14; Mo Xiaoyuan, "The Boom and Bust of China's Re-

440th issue, the work team discovered that after it had given approval, a headline on the front page was changed from "In Memory of May 4" to "We Need an Environment of Liberty in which We May Speak the Truth."¹⁵

For the May 8 issue, the staff engineered a last-minute re-write of a headline for an article by Hu Jiwei. Xu, who wrote the final version, recalls: "The work team came in. They inspected every word in the issue at that time. Zhu Xingqing was deputy chief editor and I told him to take responsibility to publish the paper our way, not their way. They had inspected the newspaper during the day, but at night we made some changes and sent it to the printer's."

The new headline read, "There Will be No Genuine Stability Without Press Freedom," and the article was widely reprinted.¹⁶ Hu wrote that "what is frightening is despotism and dictatorship," not press freedom. That same issue also carried an article by Chen Lidan titled, "Why Is the Issue of Newspaper Privatization Avoided?" Chen wrote, "If we continue to take newspapers as merely an instrument for class struggle or some other instrument and continue to refuse to recognize newspapers as an information-spreading industry, we will no doubt fall behind the current international trend."¹⁷

Despite the success of such tactics, the *Herald* staff knew the noose was tightening. They had been forced to sacrifice other articles in order to publish these, and their acts of defiance grew increasingly symbolic. The week the work team arrived, the journalists wrapped a wide strip of black gauze around the interior walls of their office. To this, they pinned the hundreds of letters and telegrams of sympathy, shock and anger that they had received from around the world in support of their position. In their internal publication of readers' letters, which was sent regularly to the top Party officials, they included these messages.

The journalists tried to publish these same letters in the next two issues of the *Herald*. The work team refused permission, and

form and the Psychological Forbearance of Reformers Themselves," *World Economic Herald*, May 8, 1989, p. 5.

15. Hsiao Ching-Chang and Yang Mei-Rong, *supra* note 3, p. 120; "The Truth about the Case of *Shijie Jingji Daobao*," *supra* note 12.

16. Hu Jiwei, "There Will be No Genuine Stability without Press Freedom," *World Economic Herald*, May 8, 1989, p. 3.

17. Chen Lidan, "Why is the Issue of Newspaper Privatization Avoided [?]," *World Economic Herald*, May 8, 1989, p. 4.

said that the Party Committee had received letters supporting its decision, too. Arguing that the *Herald* had a tradition of presenting all sides of a debate, the editors then suggested publishing both types of letters. The answer was still "no."

In Shanghai and Beijing, journalists and students marched to protest Qin's dismissal and the banning of the 439th issue. The reinstatement of Qin became a rallying cry for the nascent press freedom movement. One *China Daily* editor, frustrated at his inability to do more to help his friends in Shanghai, penned a pair of elegant couplets and persuaded seventy of his colleagues to sign their name to the telegram:

Truth never dies.

The *Herald* is the pioneer of ten years' reform.

Gentlemen do not bow to force.

Leader Qin is the moral example for a whole generation.

The *Herald* editors continued to give interviews to the international media, decrying the work team's hostile takeover of their newspaper. But for Jiang Zemin, the dismissal of Qin Benli was a matter of face. He is reported to have said, "Cannot I, a member of the Politburo, even fire a bureau official?"¹⁸ The more vocal the criticism of his actions, the more impossible it became for him to back down.

The attitude of the *Herald* staff changed with the political weather. Shortly after Zhao Ziyang gave a moderate speech at the annual meeting of the Asian Development Bank, they were optimistic, but by mid-May Zhao was losing ground. Zhu Xingqing, Zhang Weiguo, and the *Herald's* New York correspondent, Pan Muping, decided to halt publication of the paper. The staff as a whole felt it was better not to publish than to have no control over what they printed. "What we wanted to publish — news about the demonstrations — the work team refused. They took out all our articles and reports. So we decided to stop. If we couldn't publish news, it would be meaningless," said Liu.

They did not, however, tell the public that the decision to stop publication was theirs and theirs alone. To the outside world, the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee appeared responsible for closing the paper, the very impression that the Party Committee had sought to avoid. The journalists claimed a Pyrrhic victory.

18. Mark V. Thompson and Yi Mu, *Crisis at Tiananmen: Reform and Reality in Modern China*, San Francisco: China Books and Periodicals, 1989, p. 124.

With publication halted, the work team retreated from the newspaper's offices, but *Herald* journalists continued to promote press freedom. On the bulletin board outside their offices, they pasted photographs of Tiananmen Square on May 21, the day after the imposition of martial law in Beijing. On May 22, Qin Benli and other *Herald* staff members marched in one of the largest demonstrations in Shanghai. The march wound its way from Huaihai Road, in the center of the city, to People's Square and then to Waitan, the seat of the Shanghai municipal administration. Journalists from *Wenhui Daily*, *Xinmin Evening Daily*, *Shanghai Youth News*, and *Shanghai Legal News* all participated.

After the June 4 crackdown, the work team returned in full force, and its attitude was much more severe. Jiang Zemin had been elevated to secretary-general of the Communist Party, and many work team members believed that his uncompromising stance toward Qin Benli and the *Herald* was a large part of the reason. They saw continued flagellation of the *Herald* as their route to promotion. Indeed, Chen Zhili was later made the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee member in charge of propaganda and Liu Ji filled her old position as head of the Propaganda Department.

The Propaganda Department decided that the *Herald* had committed not just one or two mistakes, but was flawed from the start. They accused the paper of being counterrevolutionary. Its crime was "stir[ring] up public opinion for the recent political storm, which developed from student unrest to turmoil and then to counterrevolutionary rebellion in Beijing."

On June 19 Zhang Weiguo and Xu Xiaowei were arrested. Xu was released 14 months later without being charged. After 20 months, Zhang was released, only to be re-arrested for three weeks during the summer of 1991. Chen Lebo was arrested in July and released the following March; Ruan Jiangning was detained on October 29 for one month. Zhu Xingqing says that although a "room" was reserved for him, he escaped arrest because he was a delegate to the Shanghai People's Congress and thus exempt.

The work team occupied the *Herald's* offices for eight months. During the work team's reign, the staff was forbidden to meet or talk with each other. Fan Jun recalls that when they saw each other in the office, where they were ordered every day to write self-criticisms, they could communicate only with their eyes. "Every day we studied documents from Party officials and held meetings to criticize ourselves," says Ruan Jiangning. "Anything we said would be

used to struggle against others, so I told them I didn't want to say anything. That's why I was arrested."

Lu Yi, who calls himself a "son of a bitch," a term used to refer to the offspring of victims of the Cultural Revolution, describes the actions of the work team during the months following June 4 as entirely reminiscent of the political violence employed during those ten years of turmoil. "They learned their techniques during the Cultural Revolution. We learned our survival skills the same way."

Qin Benli was very ill at this time, and his staff defied the orders of the work team in order to visit him, both at home and in the hospital. He died in 1991, exactly two years to the day after the death of another beloved and disgraced leader, Hu Yaobang. Although the official cause was cancer, his former colleagues insist that Qin was persecuted to death. Ten days before his death, he was informed that the Party had decided to suspend his membership for two years.¹⁹ Shortly afterward, he began to hemorrhage internally. Communist China, which he had helped create, had branded him a traitor.

The *Herald* journalists tell stories of people hoarding back issues of their newspaper, of the respect and even awe the name of the paper still inspires. Although they see the *Herald's* writing style and design imitated elsewhere, they believe the *Herald* set a standard that has yet to be matched.

Three years after their decision to stop publication, the editors say they have no regrets. They believe that to have published a *World Economic Herald* in name only would have been a surrender of principle. Having been denied freedom, principle was the only thing they had left. As Zhu Xingqing said in 1989: "What we want is not the six words *Shijie Jingji Daobao* [*World Economic Herald*], but a *Shijie Jingji Daobao* which is independent in style and content like before. If the style and content are changed, then *Daobao* is dead. Our fellow colleagues in *Daobao* will share this demise together."²⁰

19. Kang Hsin-ping, "Qin Benli is Again Critically Ill Following the Announcement that He has been Placed on Probation within the Party for Two Years," *Ming Pao*, April 8, 1991, p. 8.

20. "The Truth about the Case of *Shijie Jingji Daobao*," *supra* note 12.

CHAPTER 3

1989: THE PROTESTS AND THE PRESS

In the spring of 1989, Beijing's intellectuals watched with mixed emotions as students marched to the center of the city from their college campuses, staged sit-ins and hunger strikes in Tiananmen Square, and were granted audiences with senior leaders. Many of the students were expressing emotions that the older intellectuals shared, but those who had lived through times of extreme political repression feared the response that the students might provoke.

A quieter kind of protest movement had begun in intellectual circles earlier that year, sparked by the reasoned yet passionate letter of scientist Fang Lizhi to Deng Xiaoping, appealing for the humanitarian release of Democracy Wall activist Wei Jingsheng on the tenth anniversary of his arrest.¹ The editor of an unofficial magazine called *Exploration*, Wei had been sentenced in 1979 to fifteen years in prison on charges of counterrevolution. Academics, writers and journalists took up Fang's plea and circulated petitions of their own. But then, the death of former Communist Party leader Hu Yaobang sent students into the streets, and petitions were overshadowed by demonstrations.

Journalists not only reported the story, they became part of it. They marched en masse under the banners of their work units and flashed their identity cards. They were the first organized group of intellectuals on the streets, and they came out not only in support of the students, but also to voice their own demands. Young reporters — well-educated and sympathetic to the students — spent their days in Tiananmen Square and at night persuaded older editors to risk bolder coverage.

The Press Finds Its Voice

On April 18, three days after the death of Hu Yaobang, student protests began in earnest. *Science and Technology Daily* published a photo essay of the demonstrators in its April 19 edition, and the

1. Geremie Barme and Linda Jaivin, *New Ghosts, Old Dreams*, New York: Random House, 1992, pp. 23-24.

April 20 edition of *China Daily* carried a dramatic shot of students wearing headbands beneath a portrait of the deceased leader.² Wang Renzhi, the head of the Central Committee's Propaganda Department, criticized *Science and Technology's* April 19 issue, according to former Deputy Editor Sun Changjiang, but Sun told him that the students were orderly and that their requests, as reported in the paper, were reasonable.³

The real breakthrough in coverage came with the *Daily's* April 23 three-page account that described the students "commemorating Hu Yaobang" at his funeral procession. It even included some of their slogans. A widespread but mistaken rumor at the time was that this issue of *Science and Technology Daily* had been banned. Posters at Beijing, Qinghua, and People's universities warned that the paper had been closed. In fact, the paper had sold out almost immediately.

As a safeguard against retribution, the article was bylined, "Our Staff Reporters." There was no official response, and *Science and Technology Daily* reporters found themselves welcomed by students. "*People's Daily* lies to the people," the students chanted. "*Enlightenment Daily* has no light. CCTV cheats the people. *Science and Technology Daily* tells the truth."

One of the newspaper's editors recalled how the pivotal April 23 issue came to be published:

The day beforehand, my colleagues and I were out all over the city to witness and report on events. . . . By afternoon, when most of us returned to the newspaper building, the editor-in-chief decided to call a meeting. This was not your usual meeting. Everyone who wished could attend. A couple of colleagues made very radical speeches about the end of the Communist Party, but other people shut them up. Mostly we argued about whether to publish the stories or to let history pass away before our eyes.

The meeting lasted one or two hours, with lots of discussion but no conclusions. Afterwards, about ten reporters went back to their offices and began to write. . . . The stories were very rough, meaning they were not appropriate in the eyes of the chief editors. They were direct.

2. Linda Jakobson, "Lies in Ink, Truth in Blood: The Role and Impact of the Chinese Media During the Beijing Spring of '89," Cambridge, MA: Joan Shorenstein Barone Center on the Press, Politics, and Public Policy, August 1990, pp. 6-7.

3. Interview conducted by Human Rights in China.

That's because the reporters were younger and not as experienced as the editors in terms of political life. In a lot of places, a lot of sentences, you could smell a bomb. . . . So the older editors began to revise the stories, make them smoother, tone them down. In the end, they were still factual, but not as factual as we would have wished.

Sun Changjiang now says he knew when that issue was published that *Science and Technology Daily* would suffer a political purge and that he would be one of the first to go.

Still, there were stories the editors felt they couldn't chance. For the same April 23 issue, a reporter wrote a brief description of Hu Yaobang's funeral that contained a subtle reference to Zhou Enlai's death in April 1976. His editor killed the story in the early hours of the morning. Any mention of Zhou Enlai's passing was sensitive because his death had also galvanized a crowd of mourners and created a political protest movement. That movement was violently suppressed and termed "counterrevolutionary turmoil." Years later, the Party reversed its verdict on the "April Fifth Incident," saying that it had helped bring the Cultural Revolution to an end, but the memory of thousands of people spontaneously protesting in Tiananmen Square still haunted the Communist leadership in 1989.

Following the lead of *Science and Technology Daily*, *Farmers Daily* and *Workers Daily* also published stories about the student demonstrations. Then, in its April 26 edition, *People's Daily* carried a stern front-page editorial that urged people to take a "clear-cut stand against turmoil." *People's Daily* accused a "handful of people with ulterior motives" of defaming, "hurl[ing] invective at and attack[ing] Party and state leaders. They wantonly violated the country's constitution by advocating opposition to the Communist Party's leadership and socialist system. . . . Their purpose is to poison people's minds, create national turmoil and sabotage the nation's political stability and unity."⁴ The editorial was not written by *People's Daily* staff. On campuses throughout the city, copies of the paper were set ablaze by angry students, and journalists from *People's Daily* would later march under the banner, "Oppose the April 26 editorial."

4. Translation of editorial from Mark V. Thompson and Yi Mu, *Crisis at Tiananmen: Reform and Reality in Modern China*, San Francisco: China Books and Periodicals, 1989, pp. 155-157.

One editor recalls feeling as though the Cultural Revolution had returned when he read the editorial. In earlier years, this warning from the Communist Party's mouthpiece might have silenced the protests. In 1989, however, it incited the students to further action. Journalists found it impossible to ignore the continuing demonstrations — and their own support of them.

On the day the *People's Daily* editorial appeared, journalists in Beijing learned of Shanghai Party leader Jiang Zemin's decision to remove Qin Benli as editor-in-chief of the *World Economic Herald*. The *Herald* had been one of the leading voices for reform, and journalists were troubled by the realization that they remained little more than hired pens for the Party. Then they were angered when Yuan Mu, a spokesman for the State Council, told student leaders that China had no press censorship, that "news reporting is based on the system of chief editors in charge of everything in their units."⁵

The day after the *People's Daily* editorial was published, hundreds of thousands of students staged an angry demonstration to denounce it and call for a retraction. They overcame police barricades and occupied Tiananmen Square.⁶ Only one newspaper, *China Womens' Daily*, reported the massive demonstration, and it did so on the front page. A *China Daily* editor pinned that issue to his own newspaper's comment board and in red pen wrote, "Men! Look what the women have done."

On Sunday, April 30, the *Asia-Pacific Economic Times* convened the first journalists' meeting of the protest movement in its offices inside the Lu Xun Museum.⁷ The *Economic Times* was a small Guangzhou-based newspaper that had established a name for itself as independent and reform-minded. For several hours, participants discussed the student demonstrations and the situation at the *World Economic Herald* in Shanghai, but no plan of action was formulated.

On May 3, the forum was re-convened. The following day was the anniversary of the May Fourth Movement. On that date in 1919, the people of Beijing had risen up in protest against their leaders' acceptance of the Versailles Treaty, which ceded territory to the

5. "Journalists Petition for Talk," *Beijing Review*, May 22-28, 1989, p. 10.

6. Sheryl WuDunn, "China Hears Out Students, and Lets Millions Listen," *The New York Times*, April 30, 1989, p. 5.

7. Lu Xun, a cultural critic and essayist of early twentieth-century China, once wrote, "Petitioning is common enough in every country. It doesn't necessarily end in death — except, of course, in China."

Japanese. The May Fourth Movement is regarded as a high point of intellectual and patriotic fervor in China. A march had long been planned to mark the 70th anniversary, and the journalists decided to join it.

Several dozen journalists met in front of the Xinhua news agency building and marched down Changan Avenue to Tiananmen Square. They called out to colleagues watching from the sidelines to join them, and many did. By the time they reached the square, their ranks had swelled to two hundred and included people from thirty media organizations. The march was unprecedented, but what was even more remarkable, the Chinese media reported it.⁸

On the evening of May 4, demonstrators received additional encouragement from a speech given by Secretary-General Zhao Ziyang at the annual meeting of the Asian Development Bank. Distanting himself from the hardline April 26 editorial in *People's Daily*, Zhao said the students were not causing turmoil and that reforms would continue. Two days later, Zhao conveyed through his deputies the word that the press could "open up a bit."

Seizing advantage of a political struggle at the top of the Party hierarchy, journalists began reporting openly on the drama in Tiananmen Square. Their timing was crucial. The leadership was paralyzed because no one could be sure if the balance would tip in favor of the reformers or the conservatives.

A reporter from *China Youth News* says that after Zhao's speech, "Almost every day we had articles on the demonstrations. . . . Except for the [Sino-Soviet] Summit, almost all the news in our paper was about the demonstrations. We weren't worried because Zhao had said we should loosen control on the newspapers."

Journalists were striving to reflect the words and feelings of the public in their reports. One newspaper, *Beijing Youth News*, achieved this literally by publishing a poll of some five hundred

8. "Hundreds of Beijing Journalists Join Students in Demonstration," China News Agency, May 5, 1989 (translation in FBIS-CHI-89-086, May 6, 1989, p. 11); Denis Hiault, "Press Gives Wide Coverage," Agence France-Presse, May 5, 1989 (translation in FBIS-CHI-89-086, May 6, 1989, p. 11); "The First Time in China's Press," China News Agency, May 5, 1989 (translation in FBIS-CHI-89-087, May 8, 1989, p. 29); Daniel Southerland, "Beijing Students Returning to Classes," *Washington Post*, May 6, 1989, p. A18.

people on May 18. The vast majority of respondents said they supported the student movement and the hunger-strikers.⁹

A journalist for *Science and Technology Daily* remembers spending all his time either at work or in the Square. "I felt that if I miss this major event, I will be ashamed of my profession. . . . If I miss this, I miss history." With obvious pride, the same journalist recalls bringing two thousand five hundred copies of his paper to Xidan, a busy downtown intersection, and selling out within an hour.

Support for press freedom was widespread among journalists. Successive demonstrations included journalists from *People's Daily*, *China Daily*, Central China Television, Xinhua, *China Youth News*, *Beijing Daily*, *Beijing Evening News*, and many other news organizations. They shouted slogans like, "We Must Speak the Truth," and "Don't Force Us to Lie," and carried banners that proclaimed, "Don't Force Us to Spread Rumors," "Our Pens Cannot Write What We Want to Write," "I Love Free Press," and "Free Minds, Free Press."

On May 9, the journalists went even further; more than one thousand of them from thirty news organizations signed a petition, organized by Li Datong, editor of *China Youth News*' Department of Education, Science and Technology, which called for talks between journalists and government officials on reforming the press system. This was prompted by Yuan Mu's statement that the Chinese press already was free. One newspaper editor explained, "The most hated man in the country said that there was no press censorship, that the editors were fully in charge of the newspapers. That's why we were so angry. . . . We demanded to discuss censorship because the editors are not actually in charge."¹⁰

The petition was handed to officials at the All-China Journalists Association, an official government organization. It was reported favorably by *Beijing Review* — in an issue datelined after the May 20 declaration of martial law — and by Xinhua, and most other media. The reports also mentioned the crowds of students

9. Translated in *Children of the Dragon: The Story of Tiananmen Square*, New York: Collier Books, 1990, p. 91.

10. Personal interview with *Science and Technology Daily* (Keji Ribao) reporter, October 6, 1992.

who stood at the entrance of the journalists' association offices and shouted, "Speak for the People."¹¹

Over the next few days, top political leaders, including the Politburo member in charge of propaganda, Hu Qili, and Party Central Committee Secretariat member Rui Xingwen, held talks with top newspaper editors to discuss press coverage. As a result of these discussions, journalists felt that their demands for expanded rights were being firmly backed by the liberal faction of the Party. They continued to push the limits beyond what Communist China had previously known.

The media also began an intense public scrutiny of its own role. On May 5, a journalist working for China News Agency, a government wire service for overseas Chinese, surveyed the newspaper headlines about Zhao's pro-reform speech and wrote, "Such a manner of reporting is really new. . . . All signs indicate that the Chinese press is . . . unwilling to continue the policy of looking but not seeing."¹² Another article questioned the frequency of "short circuits" in the media, saying, "The advocacy of letting the people know about events of great importance has become an empty phrase."¹³

One particularly biting report, published in *Workers Daily* on May 9, criticized the practice of "selling exports in the domestic market," a reference to the fact that people in China had to rely on international sources like the British Broadcasting Corporation and the Voice of America for domestic news. According to the writer, this "violated the citizens' right to know."¹⁴

"Freedom of the press," a phrase which had been bandied about since the early 1980s, leapt from theory to practice. No longer for behind-the-scenes discussion only, it became the principle by which journalists reported the student protests, took an active part, and analyzed their own role as watchdogs. On May 18, *People's Daily* reported that more than one thousand journalists had participated in the previous day's demonstrations. In its overseas edition, most of two pages were devoted to reports on the hunger strikers at

11. "Journalists Petition for Talk," *supra* note 5; "More on Petition," Xinhua, May 9, 1989 (translation in FBIS-CHI-89-088, May 9, 1989, p. 38); "Support for Petition Noted," Xinhua, May 10, 1989 (translation in FBIS-CHI-89-089, May 10, 1989, p. 23).

12. "The First Time in China's Press," *supra* note 7.

13. "Newspaper in Beijing Asks: Why Should Short Circuits Often Happen in the Public Media?" China News Agency, May 9, 1989, translation in FBIS-CHI-89-089, May 10, 1989, p. 39.

14. *Id.*

Tiananmen Square, one of which was headlined, "History Will Remember This Day."¹⁵

Journalists took a stand on other aspects of the protest movement as well. For example, on May 18 almost all Beijing newspapers carried an open letter addressed to the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party. The letter listed three main points:

- Zhao Ziyang and Li Peng should visit the hunger strikers in the Square.
- The Central Committee should declare the students' movement patriotic and peaceful, not a cause of turmoil.
- A sincere dialogue between student representatives and the government should be broadcast live.

The letter concluded, "History is living. There are not many opportunities for our nation, which has lived through so many disasters. This could be the last chance." It was signed by fourteen news organizations, including *People's Daily*, *China Youth News*, *Science and Technology Daily*, *China Daily*, CCTV and Xinhua.¹⁶

The situation changed overnight with the declaration of martial law in Beijing on May 20. Xinhua staged a slowdown and put only five stories on the wire on May 21, according to Michael Berlin, an American professor of journalism in Beijing at the time.¹⁷ A group of courageous young reporters from *People's Daily* overseas edition managed to compile and distribute an unofficial "extra edition" of the paper, which reported Zhao Ziyang's fall from power. Four of them were arrested after the June 4 crackdown.

A well-founded fear of reprisal caused the previously daring editors at *Science and Technology Daily* to kill a story that said the Beijing subway had been closed so Army troops could be transported to the Tiananmen Square area. The government was insisting that the subway had been closed because of disruptions in service caused by the demonstrations. According to a reporter for the newspaper, "We didn't say this explicitly, but people could read between the lines. We quoted from people saying that the mechanical condition of the subway is okay. . . . There were a few lines like this and others which indicated it was not the demonstrators' fault."

15. Mark V. Thompson and Yi Mu, *supra* note 4, pp. 132-135.

16. *Science and Technology Daily*, May 18, 1989, p. 1. Translated by Zhang Xiaogang.

17. Michael J. Berlin, "Chinese Journalists Cover (And Join) The Revolution," *Washington Journalism Review*, September 1989, p. 36.

The article was laid out but never published. In general, older editors served to restrain their younger colleagues. Deputy editor-in-chief Sun Changjiang also vetoed an article with a headline calling on Deng Xiaoping to step down.¹⁸

Soon after he declared martial law, Premier Li Peng created the Emergency Period Propaganda Working Group. Yuan Mu, the State Council spokesman who earlier had declared that censorship did not exist in China, was one of its members. The Working Group attempted to force the media into absolute compliance with the Party's line on the demonstrations, but in the confusion of the moment, it was frequently outwitted by the press.

Under tremendous pressure to toe the line, journalists resorted to more subtle means of reporting the truth. *People's Daily* began a series called, "First Day of Martial Law, Second Day, etc.," which described events in Tiananmen Square in a tone so deliberately neutral that it read as an affront to the Communist Party. For example, in "Fifth Day after Martial Law Declared in Beijing," the paper noted that "the order of life is normal" and that students expressed "their gratitude to medical personnel" for administering first aid.¹⁹ On Children's Day, June 1, *People's Daily* described students playing with children in the Square. A letter from an "ordinary Communist Party member," published in the paper on June 4, expressed indignation at this style of reporting which, it said, was "designed to confound black and white, to confuse right and wrong. . . and to discredit martial law."²⁰ Many other print and broadcast media also carried reports that stressed the calmness and stability of the situation. On May 22, *People's Daily* gave prominent space to an interview with the Hungarian Prime Minister in which he said military force should not be used to resolve political disputes.²¹ Mention of sit-ins continued after martial law, and in its May 29 issue, *Beijing Review* wrote, "Anti-martial law slogans are seen everywhere. . . . Li Peng was attacked and asked to step down from his post by the demonstrators."²²

18. Interview conducted by Human Rights in China.

19. "Fifth Day after Martial Law Declared in Beijing," *People's Daily*, May 25, 1989, p. 1.

20. "A Glimpse of Tiananmen Square on June 1," *People's Daily*, June 2, 1989, p. 1; "A letter from Comrade Sun Ju," *People's Daily*, June 4, 1989, p. 1.

21. Michael Dobbs, "Journalists Link Press Freedom with Aims of Student Protestors," *Washington Post*, May 23, 1989, p. A18; Mark V. Thompson and Yi Mu, *supra* note 4, p. 139.

22. Li Haibo, "Martial Law: Declared But Not Enforced," *Beijing Review*, May 29-June 5, pp. 5-7.

The Crackdown

In a country where the placement of photographs and headlines can reveal more than actual news reports about the political situation, most Chinese readers are sensitive to the slightest nuances in coverage. Many people recall with satisfaction the *People's Daily* report of June 4. The brief article said that, according to the *People's Liberation Army Daily*, there had been a "counterrevolutionary rebellion." It described the Army as having suddenly occupied Tiananmen Square; in Chinese the words suggest force had been used. And it mentioned that *People's Daily* had received calls from hospitals reporting injuries.²³ The message was not lost on either the readers or the leadership; Li Peng was reportedly enraged, and Lu Chaoqi, the editor in charge that night, was forced to retire.

The defiance of the press, while not outright, persisted after the massacre in Beijing, which had strengthened the journalists' antagonism towards the government. *People's Daily* prominently displayed stories about the killing of student demonstrators in South Korea, one of them under the headline, "Punish by law the arch-criminals who have suppressed the people's uprising and launch a struggle to end the rule of the current regime."²⁴

The hardliners who had gained dominance struggled to regain control of a rebellious propaganda machine. Top officials sympathetic to the press, Hu Qili and Zhao Ziyang, were expelled from the Standing Committee of the Politburo. Hu was replaced by Li Ruihuan, the former mayor of Tianjin. Zhao was replaced by Jiang Zemin, who had gained national prominence as Shanghai Party leader for closing the outspoken *World Economic Herald*. Beijing mayor Chen Xitong, in a June 30 report on the turmoil, accused Zhao Ziyang of giving the press "wrong guidance for public opinion."²⁵

Journalists and everyone else in Beijing were in a state of shock. With control of the press firmly in the hands of the hardliners, many journalists simply stopped writing. Beginning June 7, *People's Daily* published only four pages a day, instead of the usual eight, until June 25.²⁶ People also stopped going to work, and

23. Translation in Geremie Barme and Linda Jaivin, *supra* note 1, p. 97.

24. Mark Thompson and Yi Mu, *supra* note 4, p. 140.

25. Chen Xitong's Report to the National People's Congress, translated in Mark V. Thompson and Yi Mu, *id.*, pp. 194-233.

26. "Renmin Ribao Notice," *People's Daily*, June 25, 1989, p. 2.

some tried to figure out how to flee the city or leave China altogether.

Party work teams were sent to most newspaper offices in Beijing to determine the extent of their involvement in the demonstrations. These investigative groups held study sessions on Communist Party documents, questioned staff members about their activities during the student movement, and asked everyone to confess their political mistakes²⁷

"I just told the truth," says a *People's Daily* reporter, "told them how many times I had participated, maybe three or four. I refused to say I had made any mistakes, but I said I was naive in not knowing the whole situation and background of the movement. My new boss thought I was in the middle-level of troublemakers, an average troublemaker. If they thought you were okay, they would let you go on. If not, they made you write more." An editor for *China Youth News* says, "I didn't apologize. I told them I just went [to the Square], that I hadn't done anything. At first, they didn't believe me. But after some time they dropped my case."²⁸

A *China Daily* editor gave this description of how he spent his time after the crackdown: "Writing self-criticisms. Attending a lot of meetings to read aloud my self-criticisms so other people could criticize my self-criticisms. Really terrible."

Journalists admit to deceiving the work teams about the extent of their participation. Furthermore, they shielded each other by destroying or hiding evidence of involvement — photographs, big character posters and banners. There was no genuine repentance. There was widespread hostility toward the Party hierarchy.

The work teams encouraged people to report on their colleagues. A reporter for *Science and Technology Daily* remembers, "There were a few guys who wanted to take advantage of the situation. They wanted to join the Communist Party and be promoted. . . . The whole atmosphere was one of fear, just like we had returned to the Cultural Revolution, because of the severe political pressure. But the Cultural Revolution also taught us not to take advantage of this kind of event." Betrayal by colleagues, friends,

27. The purge was by no means limited to Beijing. In Guangzhou, for example, *Asia-Pacific Economic Times* (*Yatai Jingji Shibao*) and *Guangzhou Daily* (*Guangzhou Ribao*) were reorganized; *Shenzhen Commerce News* (*Shenzhen Shangbao*) was closed for one year and *Shekou Communication News* (*Shekou Tongxun Bao*) was shut permanently. After the declaration of martial law, *Shekou Communication News* had held a forum and published people's reactions to the situation in Beijing.

28. Personal interview with *China Youth News* editor, April 6, 1992.

and even family was a common feature of the Cultural Revolution, and the memory instilled survivors with a heightened awareness of the importance of solidarity.

Stonewalling probably discouraged work teams in their efforts to root out troublemakers, but some journalists say many newspaper officials and work team members themselves were sympathetic to the cause. "They didn't investigate too deeply," says the *China Youth News* reporter. "They didn't do anything unless people higher up made them. They took big action against [petition organizer] Li Datong only because the Propaganda Department forced them." Li Datong was demoted.

Economics Weekly and the *New Observer* monthly were closed by mid-June. According to one news report, *New Observer* had its registration revoked because its May 25 issue carried "an on-looker's record of the April 27 demonstration" in violation of martial law.²⁹ At *Science and Technology Daily*, Editor-in-Chief Lin Zixin and Deputy Editor-in-Chief Sun Changjiang were removed from their posts. Xinhua emerged largely unscathed, and reporters credit their director's ability to protect his staff.

Among those papers allowed to continue publishing, *People's Daily* was the hardest hit. By mid-June, Qian Liren, the paper's director, and Tan Wenrui, the editor-in-chief, had left, reportedly for health reasons. Yu Huanchun, Fan Rongkang, and Lu Chaoqi, three of the deputy chief editors, were forced to retire or were transferred. A senior editor in Beijing says that of those people at the level of department director or above, all but three were dismissed. In addition, forty to sixty reporters were fired, suspended, or transferred to other units. In a popular pun on the name of former South Korean president Chun Doo Hwan, *People's Daily* became the place where *quan dou huan* — "all had been changed."

Gao Di, a vice president of the Central Communist Party School, was appointed director of *People's Daily*. A former propaganda official for the People's Liberation Army, Shao Huaze, became the new editor-in-chief. Gao Di also led a work team investigation. According to one editor, the thirty-five work team members reserved the entire 11th building of the *People's Daily* compound as the "Office for Uncovering Work." There, they conducted the "Three Greats" Campaign: Great Investigation, Great

29. "Xinguancha and Jingjixue Zhoubao Have Been Stopped from Publication," China News Agency, June 23, 1989, translation in FBIS-CHI-89-120, June 23, 1989, p. 18.

Condemnation, and Great Cleansing (*Da Shencha, Da Pipan, Da Qingxi*). Every journalist and editor was forced to undergo the work team's scrutiny.

"When they questioned you, they would say that they already knew what you had done, that there were videotapes; they had the evidence," recalls the *People's Daily* editor. "At that time, I thought any day police might show up at my house to arrest me. The whole feeling was one of terror."

On July 20, a national conference of propaganda officials was held in Beijing. The new Communist Party leadership — Secretary-General Jiang Zemin, Premier Li Peng, and Propaganda chief Li Ruihuan — sounded the theme that "proliferation of bourgeois liberalization" was a major cause of the upheaval and that journalists must "expose the hypocritical and reactionary nature of bourgeois freedom of the press."³⁰ The press quickly adopted this line. In early August, *People's Daily* published an article called, "A Tentative Analysis of Media Guidance and Press Freedom." It said:

Flaunting the banner of press freedom, [a small handful of people] adopted such methods as confusing black and white, fabricating rumors, slandering, confusing and poisoning the people's minds, instigating, and so on to attack the Party and the people. . . . Erroneous media guidance played a role in aggravating the situation. Once mass media, such as newspapers, radio broadcast, television, and so on were utilized to propagate erroneous political ideas and viewpoints, they would create political confusion. Some masses would wrongly regard them as the voice of the Party Central Committee. This would ideologically mislead and puzzle the people. . . .

Press media in our country belongs to the people. . . . Our press media has to shoulder the important task of propagating the line, guiding principle and policy of the Party and state. . . . Press media must take a clear-cut stand to adhere to correct political orientation. . . . While exercising our rights of press freedom, we must on no ac-

30. Li Jiquo and Sun Benyao, "Jiang Zemin, Li Peng Focus on Propaganda Work," Xinhua, July 29, 1989, translation in FBIS-CHI-89-139, July 21, 1989, p. 7; Sun Benyao, "Meeting of Propaganda Officials Ends July 21," Xinhua, July 21, 1989, translation in FBIS-CHI-89-140, July 24, 1989, p. 22; David Chen, "Paper Reviews Propaganda Conference," *South China Morning Post*, July 22, 1989, p. 8.

count forget our socialist responsibility for a correct media guidance.³¹

More than three years after the Tiananmen crackdown, a young journalist recalled with distress her visit to the visa section of a foreign embassy. "I told the consular official I was a reporter. He asked me if I was really a reporter. He said he didn't think there was any such thing as real news reporting in China."

The journalist returned to her apartment and got out a few, carefully preserved copies of her paper from May 1989. She studied the photographs of student demonstrators and scanned the articles again. "If we had not reported as we did," she says now, "I could not call myself a journalist. But because we did cover what was going on in the square, I believe that real journalism can exist in China."

31. Xi Chi, "A Tentative Analysis of Media Guidance and Press Freedom," *People's Daily*, August 7, 1989, p. 6.

CHAPTER 4

SINCE THE CRACKDOWN

Depression gripped China after the People's Liberation Army crushed the protest movement in June 1989. Party leaders sought to politicize every aspect of daily life, and "counterrevolutionary thought" again became a common offense. Even the success of the Asian Games, held amid much fanfare in 1990, failed to lift the malaise.

China's young street toughs, called "*liumang*,"¹ and workers who took part in the spring demonstrations were rounded up quickly after the crackdown, but prosecution of prominent students and intellectual leaders required lengthier preparation. According to an American professor in Beijing at the time, each work unit had a quota of counterrevolutionaries that it had to uncover and report. Stiff sentences were handed down as a warning to all who had entertained notions of opposition.

Almost everybody knew of someone who had been arrested. At least two dozen journalists from newspapers in Beijing and Shanghai were imprisoned; precise figures for other cities are unavailable. In addition, many journalists who were not arrested were suspended from work while under investigation and penalized through salary cuts and job re-assignments. Even those who were allowed to continue writing frequently could not use their own bylines.

Wang Juntao and Chen Ziming, the deputy editor-in-chief and the publisher of *Economics Weekly*, were sentenced in February 1991 to thirteen years in prison for being the alleged "black hands" behind the Tiananmen turmoil. Sixteen months after their arrests, they were each given one day in court. Their trials, a mockery of justice in every respect, generated an international outcry.

Qi Lin, an editor at *Beijing Daily*, was arrested in July 1991 and held for six months before being charged, tried, and sentenced to four years in prison. His crime was allegedly writing an article for

1. After hearing much from the government about the hooliganism of the so-called *liumang*, people began referring to their leaders as the *liumang zhengfu* — "government of hoods."

United Daily, a Taiwanese paper, on the personnel purges at *People's Daily*. In December 1991, Wu Xuecan, one of the *People's Daily* reporters who had published the unofficial extra edition of the paper on May 20, 1989, also was sentenced to four years. Qi Lin, a diabetic, was released on medical parole before serving out his term. Wu Xuecan is still in jail.

Intellectuals began saying to each other, "Either you go in [to jail] or you go out [leave the country]." Those who had been "in" claimed Qincheng University as their alma mater; Qincheng is the jail outside Beijing where political prisoners are held. More than ten years after Wei Jingsheng had been imprisoned for his role in the Democracy Wall movement, China was spawning a new generation of martyrs.

Hopes that the climate of repression would ease were not raised until early 1992 when Deng Xiaoping, China's retired but still paramount leader, visited the thriving special economic zone of Shenzhen in southern China. He spoke about the need for economic reform and the dangers of rigidly leftist dogma. Deng essentially granted people permission to forget about politics and put their energy into making money. Independent entrepreneurs, called *getihu*, now had the top leader's blessing, and their once-suspect profits were singled out for praise. Reformist intellectuals took heart in Deng's drive to combat leftism and sought to use it as a wedge to promote political reform. For the first time since 1989, China's newspapers became interesting again, as both political and economic reformers began to confront the hardline leftists who had been installed to tame the media after the Tiananmen crackdown.

The Press Is Forced to Teach Itself a Lesson

Throughout the summer and fall of 1989, in one provincial propaganda conference after another, journalists were exhorted to "uphold the party spirit and play the role of the party's mouthpiece."² The "counterrevolutionary turmoil" was attributed to the media's "erroneous orientation," which in turn was blamed on the

2. Nanning Guangxi Regional Service, December 2, 1989; "Uphold the Principle of Party Spirit, Strive To Do Broadcasting Work Well," Changsha Hunan Provincial Service, November 6, 1989; Zhao Fu, "Uphold the Mouthpiece Theory, the Foundation of Marxist Journalism. Eliminate Bourgeois Liberalized Views on Journalism," *People's Daily*, October 27, 1989, p. 6.

long-term influence of "bourgeois liberalization."³ The authorities had been terrified by the unruly independence of the press, and they wanted to clamp on the muzzle.

Newspapers devoted pages to the Four Basic Principles of Chinese socialism and blasted the calls for press freedom of just a few months before. *Chinese Journalist*, a trade publication, disparaged the phenomenon of the Party "running newspapers that oppose itself." During two months of unrest, "certain strange views, aimed at weakening and breaking away from the Party's leadership, appeared in the news media. . . . One of these views denies the role of the news media as a socialist mouthpiece." The commentator concluded that "we must uphold the principle of party spirit and journalism, uphold the political orientation that journalism must serve the people and socialism, and resist the various viewpoints on journalism of Western bourgeoisie."⁴

Economic Reference explained that the type of press freedom "trumpeted by [political scientist] Yan Jiaqi," mostly in the pages of the *World Economic Herald*, was the freedom "to spread rumors and to wantonly abuse the Party and state leaders."⁵ In yet another tirade, the newspaper said, "The editor-in-chief responsibility system is not the editor-in-chief-doing-whatever-he-wants-to-do system."⁶

The Party again and again attacked the notion that journalists had any right to report the news independent of Party policy. In October 1989, *Guangming Daily* wrote, "Should a journalist persist in his individual freedom, unwilling to integrate himself with the collective and its leaders and selecting and editing news at will, his personal freedom will run counter to the collective's road of advance. . . . [He] will ultimately become isolated and abandoned by the wheel of history."⁷

These media harangues were intended to bring journalists into line behind Party leadership and to re-educate the public. If the

3. "Forum Held by the Literature and Art Bureau of the CPC Central Propaganda Department Calls for Adhering to Correct Political Orientation," *People's Daily*, September 21, 1989, p. 2.

4. "Upholding the Principle of Party Spirit in Journalism," *Chinese Journalist*, August 15, 1989, pp. 4-5.

5. Hu Zhishen, "A Talk Beginning with the 'Press Freedom' Trumpeted by Yan Jiaqi and Associates," *Economic Reference*, September, 17 1989, p. 1.

6. Yu Quanyu, "On the Editor-in-Chief Responsibility System," *Economic Reference*, September 18, 1989, p. 4.

7. Xie Gongwang, "Plain Talk on Freedom of the Press," *Guangming Daily*, October 13, 1989, p. 3.

media had previously led people astray, it was now responsible for correcting their thinking. Operating under tight restrictions and with demoralized staffs, the press served up a dreary stream of politically correct stories, most of them warning against the Party's new demon: the Western conspiracy to conquer China through "peaceful evolution." The spiritual pollution of 1983 and the bourgeois liberalization of 1986, like a serialized horror film, had returned in an even more insidious form. Corruptive Western influence — everything from "sexual emancipation" to the "worship of money" — was blamed for the "counterrevolutionary turmoil."

The People's Liberation Army Daily, in a December 1989 editorial notable for both its militarism and its paranoia, revealed that "a world war without the smoke of gunpowder" had been planned "by the international monopoly bourgeoisie for a long time."⁸ An article in *Gansu Daily* traced the spring demonstrations to "the infiltration and subversion of the international hostile forces and. . .the spread of bourgeois liberalization. . . . For this reason, we must resolutely and unremittently carry out long-term and in-depth struggles against bourgeois liberalization. . .so that the soil and conditions for peaceful evolution can be eliminated."⁹

Launched in the summer of 1989, this campaign was still active two years later, when *People's Daily* carried an editorial, "Build a Great Wall of Steel to Resist Peaceful Evolution."¹⁰ In June 1991, the Foreign Correspondents Club of Beijing was forced to re-name a social function that they had called, at their peril, "The Peaceful Evolution Ball."

The language of class struggle had returned. The Communist Party, trying to strengthen its hold on a disillusioned people, trumpeted new heroes. The press featured model cadres and "loyal students," and discussed the "character and morals" of communists in the face of difficulties. The media was also assigned the task of cosmetic surgery on the Army's image. In December 1989, Xinhua began a glowing six-part series on the People's Liberation Army.¹¹

8. Wang Yaoting, "Beware the Glint and Flash of Cold Steel in the 'Halo of Peace,'" *People's Liberation Army News*, December 1, 1989, p. 2.

9. "To Prevent Peaceful Evolution It is Imperative to Oppose Liberalization," *Gansu Daily*, December 15, 1989, p. 3.

10. *People's Daily*, August 16, 1991, p. 1.

11. "PLA Soldiers Educated to Serve People Wholeheartedly," Xinhua, December 25, 1989, translation in FBIS-CHI-90-013-S, January 19, 1990, p. 25.

There was even an attempt to revive the “Learn from Lei Feng” campaign of the early 1960s.

Lei Feng was a soldier who in his brief life — he was crushed to death by a telephone pole — managed to record in his diary every one of his good deeds and his unswerving devotion to Mao and the Communist Party. *China Youth Daily*, in a page one commentary, insisted, “The Torch of Lei Feng[’s] Spirit Will Never Go Out.”¹² Xinhua reported Army and Communist Youth League leaders discussing ways of launching “activities to learn from Lei Feng” and Beijing Television carried scenes of Central Military Commission members taking the Lei Feng campaign to the streets and alleys of Beijing.¹³ In resurrecting a man dead for nearly three decades, the Party revealed a stunning paucity of new ideas.

These massive doses of political rhetoric succeeded mostly in boring the public. Journalists called the news “empty talk.” Forced a monotonous diet of stories glorifying Lei Feng and decrying bourgeois liberalization, people sought entertainment elsewhere and editors suffered a drastic fall in subscriptions.¹⁴ Among the ten top news stories of 1991, as determined by a panel of editors from national newspapers, were such exciting developments as the readjustment of state prices for grain and cooking oil, a decision by the Party to “strengthen work in rural areas,” and the presentation of a “first-class hero model” award to a state scientist.¹⁵

Even journalists stopped reading the papers. A joke common at the time played on the names of the propaganda chiefs — Ai Zhisheng, He Jingzhi, and Wang Renzhi. Punned, they sound like love, respect, and endurance. For good measure, the Minister of the State Council Information Office was named Muzhi, which can also mean wooden.

Lei Feng failed to stir the people’s imagination, and instead of emulating his feats they turned their attention to private business ventures or plans to go abroad. The younger generation tuned into

12. “The Torch of Lei Feng Spirit Will Never Go Out,” *China Youth News*, December 15, 1989, p. 1.

13. “Yang Baibing, CYL Leaders Discuss Lei Feng,” Xinhua, February 25, 1990; Beijing Television Service, January 21, 1990.

14. Zhang Weiguo, “Press Freedom Is the Only Way for Mainland Newspapers to Extricate Themselves From Their Predicament,” *Ming Pao*, March 9, 1992, p. 4. Interview conducted by Human Rights in China.

15. “Editors Select Top News Stories for 1991,” Xinhua, December 28, 1991, translation in FBIS-CHI-92-003, January 6, 1992, pp. 33-34.

the protest songs of Cui Jian¹⁶ and Hou Dejian and wore T-shirts with messages of boredom and discontent. Nicknamed cultural shirts, they bore messages like, "I'm fed up! Leave me alone!" and "No capital to run a stall. No skill to enter school. No way to become an official. No money to go abroad." The media described them as decadent and unhealthy, and the T-shirts soon disappeared.¹⁷

A somewhat subversive "Cult of Mao" sprung up. Mao, after all, could not be considered a party to peaceful evolution. Suddenly, his face was everywhere — hanging from the rear view mirrors of taxicabs and emblazoned on T-shirts. Old Cultural Revolution icons were now sold in the free markets. Mao became kitsch. Although newspapers carried reports on the deep affection still felt for Mao, in fact, the Party regarded these displays with dismay. The fetish was unauthorized, unorthodox, and yet they could not ban the Chairman. It was a none-too-subtle slap in the face of Party leaders. Even Mao, the thinking went, was better than the guys running the Party now.

Cautious Coverage of Foreign News

Chinese leaders were wary of international events that might re-ignite the protest movement. In the fall of 1989, as Communist regimes crumbled in Eastern Europe, Party fears were apparent in the limited media attention given to the overthrow of Ceausescu in Romania, the Velvet Revolution in Prague, and the fall of the Berlin Wall.¹⁸ Despite the government's effort to enforce a news embargo, most Chinese learned of massive pro-democracy movements in these countries by listening to the Voice of America and the British Broadcasting Corporation, and they were encouraged that dictatorships elsewhere had been toppled.

16. According to *The Standard*, a Hong Kong newspaper, Cui Jian was so detested by authorities that mention of his name was banned from press reports (October 24, 1991).

17. Nicholas D. Kristof, "Even Gloomy T-Shirts Fall Under Censorship," *The New York Times*, July 29, 1991, p. 3; Rong Ya, "Phenomenon of Cultural T-Shirts," *People's Daily*, July 12, 1991, p. 3; "Beijing Bans T-Shirts with Words Venting Complaints," *Ming Pao*, July 6, 1991, p. 2.

18. Daniel Southerland, "Deng Said to Warn Chinese Against Gorbachev's Ideas," *Washington Post*, November 23, 1989, p. A49; Steven Erlanger, "China's Lonely Press Tries to Look the Other Way," *The New York Times*, December 24, 1989, p. 8; Mark O'Neill, "China Mum on East Germany As Gap Between People, Party Widens," *Reuters*, December 11, 1989.

In August 1991, the Chinese government rejoiced at the hardline communists' attempt to overthrow Mikhail Gorbachev in the Soviet Union, and it provided extensive same-day coverage in the Chinese media. The coup's subsequent failure and Gorbachev's return to power were downplayed. Xinhua at first delayed reporting Gorbachev's victory and then issued a terse acknowledgement on August 21.¹⁹ Equally brief, Beijing Central People's Radio reported in full: "Gorbachev issued an order yesterday to nullify all the decisions made by the State Emergency Committee and some of its members, dismiss all the committee members from their offices, and assign the chief procurator of the USSR to file criminal charges against them."²⁰ Later reports stressed the chaos of the Soviet Union's disintegration, and the implications were clear.²¹ In the wake of the "counterrevolutionary turmoil" of 1989, "stability and unity" were the leaders' watchwords.

During the Persian Gulf War in February 1991, journalists received instructions to keep news about American missile technology to a minimum. Xinhua, rather than reporting news about the fighting, reported the Chinese government's expressions of "deep anxiety and concern."²² According to a Shanghai reporter, the one newspaper that did publish a reasonably objective account, *Wenhui Bao*, was later criticized. The editor had apparently approved the story before receiving propaganda guidelines.

After the first day of hostilities, war reports did not receive front page treatment from *People's Daily* or *Beijing Daily*.²³ Quick to seize a political point, *People's Daily* ran an article called, "Thoughts on Restricted Press Coverage of the War Theater in the Gulf," about the regulations governing American, French, and British reporters. "Even in advanced Western countries that have always advocated freedom of the press, there are also certain

19. "Gorbachev in 'Full Control,'" Xinhua, August 21, 1991, translation in FBIS-CHI-91-163, August 22, 1991, p. 6; "Slow to React," Agence France-Presse, August 22, 1991.

20. "News and Press Review Program," Beijing Central People's Radio, August 22, 1991.

21. "Diplomatic Circles See Beijing TV's Detailed Report of CPSU Collapse as Designed to Offer Negative Lesson," *Ming Pao*, August 26, 1991, p. 1; Lena H. Sun, "All Quiet on the Eastern Front Page: Chinese Authorities Suppress Story of Soviet Democratization," *Washington Post*, September 19, 1991, p. D1.

22. "China Expresses Deep Anxiety and Concern," Xinhua, January 17, 1991, translation in FBIS-CHI-91-012, January 17, 1991, p. 1.

23. "Mainland China's Mass Media Play Down Gulf War," *Tangtai*, February 2, 1991, p. 11.

restrictions on news coverage, and absolute freedom of the press is by no means possible," wrote reporter Zang Zhi.²⁴

Journalists Quietly Resist the New Line

An astonishing feature of the post-Tiananmen crackdown is that the press resumed its role as the propaganda arm of the Communist Party. The same newspapers that had reported openly on the student demonstrations were now advocating the Lei Feng spirit. How did journalists go back to work after the crackdown, back to the same conditions and constraints that just a few weeks earlier they had denounced in their papers and in the streets? How were people who had discovered an independent voice forced to relinquish it?

Journalists were outspoken in 1989 because once the demonstrations had gathered force, they were able to see that press freedom had support among fellow journalists and the Chinese people. They had safety in numbers. Many journalists did take individual risks — holding banners aloft, showing their identity cards, signing names on petitions or telegrams of protest. But by and large it was a unified revolt. There was a heady atmosphere of harmony and goodwill throughout Beijing in the spring of 1989. Within the media, work units encouraged and dared each other to join in more and more forthright signs of independence. After June 4, the memory of that free spirit remained strong. Journalists could not write or speak freely, but they were biding their time.

Not all journalists went back to work. Some were jailed, and many were suspended while under investigation. Top management was re-organized. Some publications were closed, and some journalists chose exile. Ringleaders, in the eyes of the government, were transferred to non-writing positions.

Those who did return to work, however reluctantly, did so because they saw few options. Like other workers in a centralized system that allocates most jobs regardless of individual preference, journalists know they must work where they are assigned in order to eat. If they give up their jobs, they must also surrender their work unit's housing, food coupons, and other subsidies. Refusing to work on the basis of principle is more than a luxury; in China's work unit system, it can be suicidal.

24. Zang Zhi, "Thoughts on Restricted Press Coverage of the War Theater in the Gulf," *People's Daily*, January 16, 1991, p. 7.

According to one *People's Daily* editor, after the military subdued the democracy movement, his paper ran only four kinds of articles: "We supported the crackdown, criticized bourgeois liberalization, opposed so-called peaceful evolution, and stressed class struggle. Of course, I think most people within the paper did not agree with these articles, but they had no where else to go. If you expressed your opinions openly, it would be bad for you. . . . The first priority is to protect yourself."²⁵

An opinion-page editor who, like his colleagues, marched to protest Qin Benli's dismissal from the *World Economic Herald*, says simply, "There was no other choice." He demonstrated to express the feelings he held in his heart; he went back to work because he is a realist. Having survived earlier ideological purges, he steeled himself for prolonged repression. "At the time, I thought the dark period would last three or five years. That's nothing compared to the Cultural Revolution, to the ten years of great disaster." On a reporting trip abroad, the editor flirted with the idea of defecting. He returned to China only out of consideration for his co-workers. If he defected, he knew their chances for overseas travel would be sharply curtailed.

Some journalists wrote to save their skins. An editor at *China Daily*, under severe pressure because he had helped organize press demonstrations, says that in the fall of 1989 he ignored his conscience and wrote two editorials opposing bourgeois liberalization. He deliberately published them in papers with large domestic audiences; he wanted Party leaders to get the message that he was now right-thinking. His sham conversion was only partly successful. He was not arrested or fired, but he was demoted.

Living with cognitive dissonance is not new for Chinese journalists. A deputy chief editor for the *World Economic Herald* explains: "People have lived with the contradiction between what they know and think on the one hand, and what they write and publish on the other. They have suffered for many years. Sure it's harder to keep silent once you've expressed these emotions, but sometimes we anaesthetize ourselves. We don't allow ourselves to think about these subjects." A colleague agrees: "Inside, journalists may feel very conflicted. Propaganda is not what they want to write. But the strength of any one individual is small."

Post-Tiananmen headlines decrying the "counterrevolutionary rebellion" and "peaceful evolution" should not be taken as a sign

25. Personal interview with *People's Daily* editor, October 1992.

that Chinese journalists have changed their thinking. Only what they write has changed. In the spring of 1989, *People's Daily* journalists marched to protest the hardline editorial that had appeared in their own newspaper. The anger remains, but now they cannot march. An often-heard joke about another profession captures the dilemma of the press:

Two policemen are on guard in Tiananmen Square. One asks the other, "So, what do you think of June 4?"

The man replies, "Oh, I'm not really too sure about it. What do you think of it?"

The first one says, "I'm also pretty unclear. I probably feel about it the way you do."

His partner says, "I'm sorry, but if you feel about it the way I do, I'm going to have to turn you in."

Journalists may not express their feelings to colleagues, except for close friends, but resentment against being forced to follow the Party line is widespread. At one newspaper where the editor-in-chief and several department heads were forced to retire, a journalist says, "I don't feel like the newspaper I work for is mine." She now writes little, preferring editorial obscurity to by-lined lies.

In the summer of 1991, when heavy rains caused severe flooding in many provinces, she and several other reporters were sent out to investigate flood conditions. Everyone else returned and wrote glowing accounts of how the peasants were overcoming hardship with the help of the Party. Xinhua called the flood the top news story of 1991 and quoted the editor-in-chief of *People's Daily* as saying that "under the leadership of the Party. . . China succeeded in combating the flood, showing the superiority of socialism."²⁶

"That was not what I saw, that was not what I found to be true. So I didn't write a single word," says the journalist. "We may not be able to say what we want to say, but we can *not* say what we don't want to say."

Variations of this melancholy refrain are heard frequently among journalists. They reject complicity in government propaganda efforts by choosing silence. After June 4, many who remained on the payroll of their work units did not even go to their offices. It was as if some invisible labor leader had called a strike. The effects linger in both the number and quality of news stories.

26. "Editors Select Top News Stories for 1991," *supra* note 14.

The lack of in-depth coverage about important issues remains a strong source of dissatisfaction among journalists. The Chinese people are not completely cut off but the information they get is sketchy. One woman who had worked abroad explained, "I feel like I know the first sentence, or maybe the first paragraph, of a news story. But that's it." Even history, if it is controversial, is officially ignored. For example, millions of people died of starvation between 1959 and 1961 during the failed Great Leap Forward, but the subject is still taboo. "There's been no public discussion of this disaster. Maybe institutions are doing research, but no mention of it has been made in the press. We know it happened, but we don't know any of the details," said an editor.

A taxi driver said he only reads the papers to check the leadership's attitude. A member of the intelligentsia said she thought that while the media reflected the Party's thinking, the political jokes and gossip she and her friends trade reflect the people's thinking. For real news, the woman turns to foreign radio broadcasts and the Hong Kong and Western papers her friends bring her. "Even my domestic news is imported from abroad," she said.

Flashes of outright defiance have found their way into the press. In March 1991, a poem called "Sweet Dumplings" appeared in the Overseas Edition of *People's Daily*. It was supposedly the homesick tribute of an overseas student to his motherland. However, if scanned diagonally, the poem contained an acrostic that read, "Li Peng, step down to placate people's outrage."²⁷ Whether it appeared intentionally or accidentally is unknown, but the editors in charge that night were suspended.²⁸

Dissident journalists, usually ones who have been dismissed, give interviews to Western and Hong Kong media, and even publish articles in overseas publications. Zhang Weiguo of the closed *World Economic Herald* was among the first to tempt official tolerance in this manner, and spent three weeks in jail during the summer of 1991 for his boldness. Undaunted, he has continued to speak out on issues of press freedom and political persecution, and has continued to write articles for Hong Kong papers under his own name. Former *People's Daily* editors Qin Chuan, Hu Jiwei, Yu Huanchun and

27. Nicholas D. Kristof, "Chinese Premier Defends '89 Crackdown on Protesters," *The New York Times*, April 10, 1991, p. 3. Eugene Eoyang, "Lantern Festival," *The New York Times*, April 30, 1991, p. 30.

28. The editors were An Zizhen and Zhuang Yongling — *Attacks on the Press 1991*, New York: Committee to Protect Journalists.

Wang Ruoshui have all given interviews to Hong Kong journalists.²⁹ Some Chinese journalists also write for Hong Kong and Taiwan papers under pen names.

Cracks Appear in the Wall of Propaganda

The first sign of change since the Tiananmen crackdown came in the spring of 1991. *Liberation Daily*, the organ of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee, published a series of essays under the pseudonym Huangfu Ping. "Huangfu" is a nickname for the river, the Huangpu Jiang, that flows through Shanghai, and "ping" means comment. Huangfu Ping directly advocated more rapid economic reform; one article was titled, "Let There Be a Stronger Sense for Expanding and Opening Up." Given that the rest of the press was still belaboring the dangers of peaceful evolution and the glories of Lei Feng, *Liberation Daily's* commentaries were a definite breach. There are reports that a team from the Central Propaganda Department was sent to investigate, only to find that Huangfu Ping had the backing of Deng Xiaoping himself.³⁰

Shanghai was a natural place for such ideas to be expressed because it prides itself on being more cosmopolitan than the rest of China. "Using Shanghai to attack Beijing" was a common feature of earlier political campaigns. Furthermore, the Pudong area of Shanghai had recently been designated a special development area. Deng wanted Pudong to become the model for a "socialist market economy," and he visited the city in March 1991 to get the ball rolling. So the editors at *Liberation Daily* probably felt Deng would

29. Feng Yu-lien, "Interviewing Former *Renmin Ribao* Director Qin Chuan," *Ching Chi Jih Pao*, April 28, 1992, p. 2; Lin Tsui-fen, "Hu Jiwei Says Renmin Ribao Never Mentions the Need to Prevent Leftism," *Ming Pao*, April 7, 1992, p. 8; Lin Tsui-fen, "Yu Huanchun, Former Deputy Editor-in-Chief of Renmin Ribao, Accused a Handful of People in Power at the Newspaper of Undermining Democracy," *Ming Pao*, October 8, 1992, p. 6; "Gao Di Forbids Wang Ruoshui from Having Interviews with Foreign Journalists," *Ming Pao*, September 3, 1992, p. 6.

30. Nicholas D. Kristof, "Chinese Advocates of Change Reportedly Make Small Gains," *The New York Times*, May 23, 1991, p. 8; Chung Hsiao, "Both Jiang Zemin and Yang Shangkun Criticize Renmin Ribao; Deng States his Intention of Personnel Shuffles in the 14th CPC Party Congress," *Ching Pao*, October 5, 1991, pp. 33-36; Wei Tien-yi, "Story Behind Failure to Solve Personnel Issue at Eighth Plenary Session; Deng Says Leftist Interference Also Constitutes Turmoil," *Ching Pao*, January 5, 1992, pp. 34-38.

support publication of Huangfu Ping, even if he hadn't directly authorized it.³¹

Political change was not mentioned, probably because Deng was known to support reform only in economic affairs. Still, the appearance of Huangfu Ping had political implications. It's important to note that the breakthrough was in editorializing and not in reportage. The boundary between the two is more blurred in China than in the West — for example, important editorials in China are often found on the front page — but published opinion always paves the way for major changes of direction. This is the country where the Cultural Revolution was launched by a theater review. In China's opaque system, Huangfu Ping and commentaries elsewhere in response were more significant than any similar exchange in the letters or editorials columns of an American newspaper would be.

Nonetheless, other media remained firmly in the hands of hardliners who had been appointed to positions of power in the wake of June 4. Battle lines were drawn. Although the Hong Kong media played it as "The Hardliners vs. The Reformers," factions in China are never easy to characterize, and Party leaders are known for shifting and politically expedient allegiances. During this confrontation, however, certain divisions became clear. Deng was supported by such top leaders as Zhu Rongji, Tian Jiyuan, and Li Ruihuan. They were committed to economic reform. On the other side, in conservative Chen Yun's camp, were Wang Renzhi, the director of the Central Propaganda Department; Xu Weicheng, the deputy director; Deng Liqun, politburo ideologue; Gao Di, the head of *People's Daily*; and He Jingzhi, acting minister of culture. They were leery of any reform.

The fight between these factions was waged in the media and was partly over who would control the media. Those in the know, both Chinese intellectuals and the China-watching press in Hong Kong, went into a frenzy of speculation. As one former journalist remarked, he wasn't reading Huangfu Ping for the content, but because it drew conservative ire. He read it to scent the political winds.

Journalists thought they were beginning to see a dim light at the end of the tunnel. In January 1992, Li Ruihuan, the Party's chief ideologist, signaled an official change of direction for the media.

31. There is disagreement about how direct Deng's hand was. A reporter close to the Huangfu Ping writers says that only the party secretary of the paper, and not central authorities, approved publishing the commentaries.

Pointedly excluding bourgeois liberalization and class struggle, he told a national conference of propaganda directors that the "key point of this year's publicity work [is to] give prominence to the central task of economic construction, devote greater attention to publicizing reforms and opening to the outside world, take resolute measures to get rid of serious formalism existing in current publicity work, and work hard to help promote economic construction. . . . We should not deliver dry and empty sermons, and especially not convey formalistic propaganda."³²

The struggle heated up after Deng Xiaoping's trip to the south that same month during the Spring Festival. In Shenzhen and other boom towns near Hong Kong, Deng praised the success of special economic zones and promoted reform and opening up. These were major policy speeches by China's most important leader, but they were not reported in the national press. The Shanghai media, again, were the first to heed Deng's call. On February 4, *Liberation Daily* published a commentary supporting the Party meeting in 1978 where Deng first advocated modernization and mental emancipation.³³ Then *Shenzhen Special Zone News* began an eight-part series on Deng's talks, which was reprinted not in the national newspaper, *People's Daily*, but in Shanghai's *Wen Hui News*.³⁴

People's Daily did not carry Deng's message for more than a month, a significant lag for the newspaper that is supposed to lead the nation. Commentaries on February 24 called for "making correct use of capitalism" and being "bolder in reform."³⁵ Soon, news organizations all over the country were urging readers to "emancipate their minds" in order to quicken the pace of reform.³⁶

32. Li Demin and Sun Benyao, "Li Ruihuan Stresses the Need to Unify Thinking Based on the Theory of Building Socialism with Chinese Characteristics, to Gear Propaganda Work for Economic Construction, to Devote Greater Attention to Publicizing Reforms and Opening to the Outside World, and to Get Rid of Formalism in Propaganda Work," *Xinhua*, January 25, 1992, translation in FBIS-CHI-92-017, January 27, 1992, pp. 31-33.

33. Wen Qi, "The Line Adopted by the Third Plenary Session of the 11th CPC Central Committee Must Be Stressed for a Century," *Liberation Daily*, February 4, 1992, p. 1.

34. "Tightly Grasp the Central Link," *Shenzhen Special Zone News*, February 20, 1992, p. 1; Lan Tien, "Newsletter from Shenzhen," *Ming Pao*, March 12, 1992, p. 2.

35. Fang Sheng, "On Opening Up to the Outside World and Making Use of Capitalism," *People's Daily*, February 24, 1992, p. 1.

36. "Be More Daring in Carrying Out Reform," *Xinhua*, February 23, 1992, translation in FBIS-CHI-92-036, February 24, 1992, pp. 41-42; "Expedite the Pace of Reform, Opening Up, and Development," *Economic Daily*, February 25, 1992, p. 1; "Intensify the Building of a Spiritual Civilization and Accelerate Reform and Opening to the

Although “mental emancipation” remained as vaguely defined as the Four Basic Principles or bourgeois liberalization, journalists and editors lost no time in jumping on the reform bandwagon.

Despite this display of solidarity, the media remained far from uniform in its thinking. Many publications were still in the hands of hardline leftists, who feared the subversive effects of too much talk about “liberation” and “opening up” on their hard-won power base. In its February inaugural issue, *Contemporary Thought* warned against the rightist tendencies of reformers. *Contemporary Thought* held that reform and opening up might be “surnamed capitalism” rather than socialism and that the wrong direction could “capsize the boat.”³⁷ This was a direct challenge to the ideas and policies Deng had espoused during his Spring Festival tour. In Central Committee Document No. 2, circulated among Party cadres in early March, Deng stated unequivocally that while rightism can ruin socialism, “leftism” was now the clear and present danger. The main task, he said, was to prevent leftism from slowing reform.³⁸

Campaigns against leftism are rare in Communist China’s history. The last one immediately followed the fall of the Gang of Four at the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976. Most ideological campaigns have been against the right — from the 1957 Anti-Rightist Campaign to the 1991 drive against peaceful evolution. So reformers, liberal intellectuals, and journalists were cautiously optimistic. Leftists were alternately reported to be “Toeing Deng[’s] Line to Escape Purge” and “Finding Avenues for Dissent in the

Outside World,” *Liberation Daily*, March 10, 1992, p. 1; “Clarion Call to Further Ideological Emancipation,” *Shenzhen Commerce News*, March 12, 1992, translation in FBIS-CHI-92-052, March 17, 1992, pp. 58-59; “Carry on In-Depth Mass Discussion on Further Emancipation of the Mind,” *Hunan Daily*, March 26, 1992, translation in FBIS-CHI-92-062, March 31, 1993, pp. 57-58; “Bo Yibo on Emancipating Mind, Accelerating Reform,” *Xinhua*, March 31, 1992; “The First Thing is to Emancipate the Mind,” *People’s Daily*, April 16, 1992, p. 4.; “It is Imperative to Emancipate the Mind to Deepen Reform,” *Wen Hui Daily*, April 18, 1992, p. 1.

37. Lin Chui-fen, “Journal Run by Central Propaganda Department Stresses that Erroneously Targeting a Political Trend will Capsize Boat,” *Ming Pao*, April 10, 1992, p. 66; Lu Yu-shan, “Chen Yun Responds to Document No. 2,” *Tangtai*, May 15, 1992, pp. 21-22; Chuang Meng, “Deng Xiaoping and Chen Yun Reached a Political Agreement More than Two Months After the Publication of Deng’s Remarks Made During His Tour in Southern China,” *Ching Pao*, June 6, 1992, pp. 36-38.

38. “Text of CPC Central Document No. 2,” *Ching Chi Jih Pao*, March 12, 1992, p. 3; Lu Yu-shan, “Chen Yun Responds to Document No. 2,” *supra* note 34; “Deng Says, ‘China Should Guard Against Rightism, But More Important Should Prevent Leftism,’” *Ming Pao*, March 7, 1992, p. 2; Nicholas D. Kristof, “As Deng Calls for Reform, China Waits,” *The New York Times*, April 26, 1992, p. 44.

Media.”³⁹ A quick scan of the headlines shows that they were doing both.

In late March and early April, almost all the Beijing media began reprinting the *Shenzhen Special Zone News* article, “East Wind Brings Spring All Around: On-the-Spot Report on Comrade Deng Xiaoping in Shenzhen.”⁴⁰ Again, it is significant the article came from a Shenzhen paper and not from Xinhua or *People’s Daily*, the supposed Party vanguards. That a trip almost three months old was now receiving national attention reflected the deep schisms in the propaganda front. Former *People’s Daily* editors Hu Jiwei and Qin Chuan, in interviews with Hong Kong media, criticized the paper’s new director, Gao Di, for not actively promoting Deng’s line on “guarding against leftism.”⁴¹ Although Hu Jiwei had been declared *persona non grata* since June 4, Qin Chuan was still a member of the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress and he was vocal in his contempt for Gao Di, labeling pro-reform articles a “perfunctory show of support.” Rumors were rife that investigative teams had been sent into the newspaper to examine “leftist” trends.⁴²

In August, *People’s Daily* ran a strongly pro-economic reform article that Gao Di had written four years earlier.⁴³ But few readers took Gao Di’s change of heart seriously. One journalist says that when she read this article, she thought, “Aha! There are no 3,000 pieces of silver buried here.” The line refers to a Chinese tale in which a dimwitted peasant posts a sign at the place where he has hidden his treasure: “There are no 3,000 pieces of silver buried here.” The point was that Gao Di was protesting too loudly.

39. Willy Wo-lap Lam, “Leftists Said Toeing Deng[’s] Line to Escape Purge,” *South China Morning Post*, March 9, 1992, p. 13; Geoffrey Crothall, “Leftists Finding Avenues for Dissent in Media,” *South China Morning Post*, March 10, 1992, p. 11.

40. Beijing Central Television, March 31, 1992; “Highlights of Beijing-Based Newspapers for March 31,” Xinhua, March 31, 1992, translation in FBIS-CHI-91-063-S, April 1, 1992, pp. 17-18.

41. Lin Tsui-fen, “Qin Chuan Criticizes *Renmin Ribao* for Ineffective Support for Deng’s Remarks,” *Ming Pao*, April 3, 1992, p. 6; Lin Tsui-fen, “Hu Jiwei Says *Renmin Ribao* Never Mentions the Need to Prevent Leftism,” *Ming Pao*, April 7, 1992, p. 8; Feng Yu-lien, “Interviewing Former *Renmin Ribao* Director Qin Chuan,” *Ching Chi Jih Pao*, April 28, 1992, p. 2.

42. Willy Wo-lap Lam, “Investigative Units Root Out Leftist Influence,” *South China Morning Post*, April 8, 1992, p. 13; Cheung Po-ling, “Li Ruihuan Begins Government Anti-Leftist Campaign,” *The Standard*, March 26, 1992, p. A8; Cheung Po-ling, “Journalists Urge Party Investigation of Gao Di,” *The Standard*, April 17, 1992, p. A5.

43. Gao Di, “Use the Productive Forces Criterion to Judge What is Right and What is Wrong,” *People’s Daily*, August 24, 1992, p. 4. Written in August 1988.

Deng's Words as Camouflage

Throughout the debate on "leftism" versus "rightism" and whether reform was "surnamed socialism or surnamed capitalism," there was never any doubt that only economic — not political — reform was at issue. Political liberals hoped and hardliners feared that economic reform would invariably lead to other kinds of opening up. The campaign against peaceful evolution repeatedly had warned about the corrupting influence of Western ideas. If China began liberalizing the economy through market-style innovations, if more and more cities became like Shenzhen, which looked to Hong Kong as a model, change in the political structure eventually would follow.

In the meantime, the "vigilance against leftism" initiated by Deng created opportunities for people to put forth ideas that, in the dark couple of years following June 4, otherwise would have been unthinkable. In an interview with *The New York Times*, an unnamed official said, "Whatever you want to do these days, you cite Deng Xiaoping. If you want to start a brothel, then you say, 'Well, Comrade Xiaoping says we should take bolder steps!'"⁴⁴

The first example of "waving the Deng flag" was not a brothel but a book. Called *The Tide of History*, it was a collection of anti-left essays edited by Yuan Hongbing, a young law lecturer at Beijing University, and published in April 1992. Liberal intellectuals and journalists, including Hu Jiwei, contributed pieces. In his article "On Mainly Guarding Against Leftism," Hu had denounced the rule of hardline ideologues, especially Gao Di at *People's Daily*, and criticized the campaigns against bourgeois liberalization and spiritual pollution. Less than a month after its publication, the book was banned, reportedly on the recommendation of He Dongchang, vice minister of the State Education Commission.⁴⁵ The book's price on the black market almost quadrupled.

By June, however, He Dongchang had been ousted, the book's authors had held a seminar in a Beijing hotel, and Yuan Hongbing had filed a law suit, later rejected, against the Party Committee that banned his book.⁴⁶ The atmosphere was good, but not too good.

44. Nicholas D. Kristof, "As Deng Calls for Reform," *supra* note 35.

45. Lincoln Kaye, "Reformist Roadshow," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, June 25, 1992, p. 19; He Po-shih, "Reformist Faction Strikes Back Hard at Conservative Faction," *Tangtai*, June 15, 1992, pp. 18-20; Lu Ming-Sheng, "Inside Story of How 'Historical Trends' Was Banned," *Cheng Ming*, July 1, 1992, pp. 33-34.

46. Lu Mu-sen, "Before and After He Dongchang Steps Down," *Cheng Ming*, July 1, 1992, pp. 23-25; Ouyang Wei, "Leftist Lords on Verge of Nervous Breakdown," *Pai*

For example, no mention of *The Tide of History* was made in the official press. Instead, it was carried in internal reference publications. When a former journalist was asked what he thought was going on, he smiled and said it was a case of *la da qi zuo hu pi* — “using a big flag like the skin of a tiger.” Deng’s anti-leftism campaign had created more room for reformers.

Three Openings for Bolder Coverage

A courageous and far-sighted deputy editor-in-chief who was dismissed after June 4 lists three important arenas in which coverage has opened up since May 1992, the time when Deng’s trip began to make national news:

- Investors’ need for reliable information has pressured the media to supply real news affecting business, not rhetoric.
- Local media, especially in the South, have realized that their audiences have different interests than those dictated by the central government.
- Editors have recognized the need to make papers more appealing to readers and have begun featuring more lively cultural news — with the support of some top Party leaders.

A number of new financial publications had appeared before Deng’s pilgrimage, but afterwards public demand for business news skyrocketed. Economics was no longer relegated to the back pages of general newspapers. Some newspapers launched weekly supplements, and some business news magazines became daily papers. *Financial Times* began a new monthly, *China Financial Journal*, in October 1992. *Economic Daily* added a special column, “Forum on a Market Economy.” One new publication, the daily *China Economic News Bulletin* in Chinese and English, is a joint venture between *People’s Daily* and an American high tech company.⁴⁷ Xinhua News Agency, adapting to new demands, started a “special

Hsing, July 1, 1992, pp. 6-7; Sun Kuo-han, “Deng Delivers Long Speech at Shoudu Iron and Steel Company, Advocates Promoting Talent in Economic Management to Run Government,” *Ching Pao*, July 5, 1992, pp. 31-55; Chaung Meng, “The CPC is Deliberating on Name List for the New Political Bureau Standing Committee Members,” *Ching Pao*, August 5, 1992, pp. 34-37.

47. “Daily Economic Bulletin Begins Publishing,” Xinhua, May 21, 1992, translation in FBIS-CHI-92-100, May 22, 1992, p. 48.

line for financial news," accessible via computer networks and fax machines, in the fall of 1992.⁴⁸

Vigorous business reporting may help pry open press coverage in general. A former economics reporter sees a shackled press as one of the main impediments to economic development in China. He points out that if China's investors are going to compete with foreign buyers — the new Shanghai and Shenzhen stock markets are open to both — they will need to know about major international events like the Persian Gulf War.

The need for credible news reporting was apparent in the coverage of the recent Shenzhen riot. In August 1992, hundreds of thousands of people swarmed into Shenzhen to purchase lottery tickets that could later be exchanged for share vouchers on the Shenzhen stock market. Demand far exceeded the supply, and ticket prices surged as buyers realized they could turn a quick profit. Angry would-be investors charged officials with corruption, and a riot broke out. It didn't help matters that reports in *Shenzhen Special Zone News* tried to play down the incident. People present at the time knew the truth of the matter, and demanded accurate news coverage. The discrepancy between what happened and what was reported was so blatant that members of the Central Propaganda Department went to Shenzhen to investigate "media biases."⁴⁹

Today's business newspapers see the *World Economic Herald* as an inspiration but not necessarily a model. While the *Herald* was theoretical, aimed at academics and other intelligentsia, one editor said his paper hopes to be accessible to entrepreneurs. "They dealt with macroeconomic issues," he says. "We cover microeconomics."

Like the *Herald*, his business newspaper is independent of government subsidies and survives on subscriptions and advertising. It reports on the markets, on world trade, on trends in technology, and it provides investment advice. It also offers personal profiles

48. "Economic Newspaper to Become Daily," Xinhua, November 16, 1992, translation in FBIS-CHI-92-222, November 17, 1992, p. 32; "Information Tidbits Prior to Close of Congress," Xinhua, October 18, 1992, translation in FBIS-CHI-92-202-S, October 19, 1992, p. 1; Zhou Ling, "Financial Journal Approved for Open Circulation," Xinhua, October 24, 1992, translation in FBIS-CHI-92-210, October 29, 1992, p. 5; "Xinhua Special Line for Financial News," Xinhua, November 14, 1992, translation in FBIS-CHI-92-221, November 16, 1992, p. 37.

49. "Central Propaganda Department Investigation Team Arrives in Shenzhen to Investigate Incorrect Media Reporting on Stock Market Disturbance," *Ming Pao*, September 1, 1992, p. 5.

and short interviews with "average" job-hunters. Beijing readers welcomed the paper's coverage of the Shenzhen riot, calling it the most informative and the most balanced. The editor says he avoids editorial writing because he doesn't believe in telling people what to think. Several investigative pieces have caused trouble, however, and the editor has had to write three formal self-criticisms. More often, differences are resolved by talking with propaganda officials and promising to be more careful next time.

Most journalists believe economic revitalization will lead to political reform, but they offer different timelines for the pace of change. A former *Herald* editor thinks it will take ten to fifteen years to reach pre-June 4 levels of free expression. Others expect more rapid change. One reporter said, "State enterprise reform cannot occur without a breakthrough on the political front."

Xinhua reported in September that plans to reorganize the bureaucracy include making "government departments offer more services rather than interference in business operations of enterprises." "Performance ratings, awards and punishments, and appointments and dismissals" would soon be introduced, too, all novelties in a system where ideological conformity has been the main basis for advancement.⁵⁰ A September article in the magazine *Outlook*, about the burdens caused by a top-heavy state bureaucracy, told of an impoverished county with a population of 300,000 that supports an administrative staff of 160,000 state employees.⁵¹ The article said, "Overstaffing is a hotbed of bureaucracy and serves to lower work efficiency," and it quoted an entrepreneur as saying, "Too many interferences from higher authorities. . . constitute an invisible yoke for us."

Economic Reference, the same newspaper that had delivered such vehement attacks against Hu Jiwei's and Yan Jiaqi's concepts of press freedom, urged an end to weekly political study sessions, saying "Formalistic political study is tiring, wastes time, affects work, and produces very little effect. . . . Such restricting ideas as 'politics is above all else' and 'politics is the lifeblood of economic work' prevent people from boldly criticizing political study."⁵²

50. Li Wei, "New Measures on Personnel Affairs," Xinhua, September 22, 1992, translation in FBIS-CHI-92-185, September 23, 1992, p. 24.

51. Liu Jinghuai, "It is Imperative to Streamline Administration," *Outlook*, September 7, 1992, pp. 18-19.

52. "Factories Urged to End Political Study Sessions," Agence France-Press, August 31, 1992, in FBIS-CHI-92-169, August 31, 1992, p. 13; Fu Xingyu, "It is Time to Put

Economic publications have succeeded because they fill a niche. Another trend is regional specialization. Provincial and even municipal print and broadcast outlets are increasingly geared towards local audiences, which means they sometimes veer away from the demands of Party cadres in the capital. Shanghai is perceived as more liberal than Beijing, and the commercial towns of the south take their cue from Hong Kong.

Radio Guangzhou, China's first 24-hour station, now offers live phone-in programs, traffic reports, and rock music to compete with broadcasts from nearby Hong Kong.⁵³ The manager of a new radio station in Shanghai told Xinhua that he hoped to provide "colorful entertainment" and introduce "popular foreign music pieces." The station planned to invite guests from Taiwan to produce programs.⁵⁴ Also in Shanghai, an English-language newspaper devoted to "reports on the investment environment and the status of opening up and economic construction in Shanghai" began publishing in November 1992.⁵⁵

The editor-in-chief of *Economic Daily*, in an interview with the Hong Kong paper *Ta Kung Pao*, cited "keen competition in news reports" and people who read newspapers "published in Hong Kong and Taiwan" as reasons to enliven domestic media or risk losing market share.⁵⁶ In southern China and Fujian Province, where people can tune into Hong Kong and Taiwanese programming, competition is particularly intense; Fujian television began broadcasting a second set of programs in order to, as the station director said, "fight for viewers who originally belong to us."⁵⁷

The industrial northeast has also seen new developments: *The Orient Morning Post* and the *Northeast Asia Economic Paper*, news-

an End to Weekly Political Study Sessions that have been Rendered Mere Formalities," *Economic Reference*, August 31, 1992, p. 1.

53. Andrew Browne, "Canton Radio Station is Democracy in Action," Reuters, May 19, 1992.

54. "Jiang Inscribes for New Shanghai Radio Station," Xinhua, October 28, 1992, translation in FBIS-CHI-92-209, October 28, 1992, p. 32.

55. "Shanghai Officials Inscribe New English Newspaper," China News Agency, November 19, 1992, translation in FBIS-CHI-92-225, November 20, 1992, p. 41.

56. Li Ping-hua, "Interviewing Fan Jingyi, Editor-in-Chief of *Jingji Ribao*, on Press Reform and Changing Concepts," *Ta Kung Pao*, October 16, 1992, p. 2.

57. Shen Hungfei, "Fujian Television Station Soon Will Start Beaming Its Second Program," *Wen Wei Po*, December 30, 1990, p. 1.

papers devoted to coverage of the economy and technology in northeast Asia, began publishing in October 1992.⁵⁸

Newspapers are also running more social and entertainment features, movie reviews, and interviews with pop stars in an effort to entice readers. Li Ruihuan in August said at an art festival in Inner Mongolia that literature and art should not have to serve ideological functions. The Party's chief of ideology said, "[W]e should not flagrantly interfere in literary and artistic works, as long as they do not violate the state's constitution and laws."⁵⁹ Beijing Radio said Li's remarks "were directed at China's excessive emphasis on ideological, political, and educational aspects in literature and art several years ago."⁶⁰

Li's August speech was a far cry from a page one commentary carried in *Guangming Daily* two years earlier. In a piece titled, "Carry Forward the Revolutionary Tradition in Literature and Art," Culture Minister He Jingzhi wrote about the "negative effects" of art and literature with "erroneous ideological content."⁶¹ Li was signaling the liberation of cultural work from the burden of revolutionary dogma.

After Li's speech, an opinion-page editor who had thought about defecting printed a piece on the obsolescence of the professional writers system. In China, all writers belong to the Writers' Association, whereby they are paid by the state and subject to its dictates. A former colleague, now living in the United States, was delighted to see the piece, but pointed out that it was printed in an obscure lower corner of the page. Other media have also criticized the "practice of the state supporting writers" and have called for art devoid of political ideology.⁶²

58. "Heilongjiang Begins Publication of New Paper," Harbin Heilongjiang People's Radio Network, October 19, 1992; "'Nongovernmental' Newspaper Becomes Available," Heilongjiang People's Radio Network, October 20, 1992.

59. As part of the liberalizing trend, two of Zhang Yimou's films which had been banned on the mainland, "Raise the Red Lantern" and "Judou," were publicly screened for the first time in September 1992. Zhang, who had previously been vilified, received lavish praise in the official press.

60. "The Wind of Reform Sweeps Across China's Literature and Arts Fields," Beijing Radio, September 8, 1992.

61. He Jingzhi, "Carry Forward the Revolutionary Tradition in Literature and Art, Correctly Express the Reality of the Times," *Guangming Daily*, August 3, 1990, p. 1.

62. "Relaxed Political Environment Urged," Xinhua, October 17, 1992, translation in FBIS-CHI-92-203-S, October 20, 1992, p. 41; "Noted Writers Attack Leftism in Literature, Art," *Wen Wei Pao*, October 16, 1992, p. 3; "Wang Meng on Writers Becoming Businessmen," China News Agency, October 23, 1992, translation in FBIS-CHI-92-208,

Liberation Daily ran an article by Wang Meng, the minister of culture who had been dismissed after the 1989 crackdown, that said, "If all our literary works are like women with bound feet, that is, stereotyped scripts that follow the same pattern written on instruction, or in line with the wishes of higher-ups. . . will there be liberation of the spirit or full arousal of initiative? Will there still be a sound development of reform and opening up?"⁶³ As recently as January 1991, Wang had been attacked for having "doubted and denied Marxism and posed the pluralistic nature of literature."⁶⁴

Xinhua on October 17 quoted a film star as saying, "There should be an earnest implementation of the policy of 'letting a hundred flowers bloom and a hundred schools of thought contend.'"⁶⁵ This refers to Mao's exhortation to intellectuals to voice their different thoughts and criticisms in the mid-1950s. When they did, Mao cracked down with the Anti-Rightist Drive. A few days later, *China Daily* quoted the vice-chair of the China Film Association as saying, "Literature has its own law. . . . There is no need to bother about what and how writers write."⁶⁶

Strict Limits Remain

Restrictions on the press are looser now than before Deng's trip south, but they remain rigid. "Although it is possible now to publish articles which criticize or question specific points about economic reform," says one journalist, "it is not possible to present views which diametrically oppose the whole idea of economic reform. One can't, for example, say that economic liberalization on the whole is a bad thing."

"Things are still much tighter than before June 4," a business editor points out. "Then you could at least discuss political and legal issues and different kinds of socialism, but now you can only discuss economic reform and not political at all. You can criticize people, but not Party chiefs and not ministers. Once in a while,

October 17, 1992, p. 27; "Beijing Writers Seminar Criticizes Leftism," China News Agency, October 27, 1992, translation in FBIS-CHI-92-209, October 28, 1992, p. 25.

63. Wang Meng, "Subject Matter and Writers," *Liberation Daily*, September 10, 1992, p. 7.

64. "Former Culture Minister Wang Meng Denounced," Agence France-Presse, January 25, 1991.

65. "Relaxed Political Environment Urged," Xinhua, October 17, 1992, translation in FBIS-CHI-92-203-S, October 20, 1992, p. 41.

66. Kathy Chenault, "Writers Demand End to Censorship, New Sign Hard-liners Losing Ground," Associated Press, October 24, 1992.

during an anti-corruption campaign, you can criticize a minister. This is done only to appease the public.”

Targets for criticism are determined by the level of the newspaper. *People's Daily* is equivalent to a ministry. It can criticize those below ministry level. Provincial papers can criticize officials at the county level. Like everything else in China, criticism is hierarchical.

The business editor emphasizes that *baodao de quanli* — “the right to report” — is more important than the right to criticize. “If you criticize, the government will feel threatened and try even harder to control you. But right now freedom of reportage is more relaxed. People already know who's bad and who's good. They get it from small-path news.⁶⁷ So we don't need to publish news about who has made what mistakes.” “Small-path news” is the Chinese term for non-official information sources, which may include gossip and rumor but usually captures the flavor, if not the facts, of the news.

Freedom of expression, if not of publication, is much more open than in the period immediately following June 4. “Whereas before, if you didn't follow the Party, you were their enemy, now as long as you don't say bad things about them, you're their friend,” said one former journalist. “It's okay now to be critical in public, on the bus, wherever. Even Party cadres curse the system at home. If they arrested every person who was critical out in the open, there wouldn't be enough jail cells.”

The immense popularity of the television series, “Stories from the Newsroom,” leaves little doubt that people in China know much more goes on behind the scenes than they are told on the front pages. The weekly sitcom, aired on Central China Television, is an ironic send-up of the foibles of daily life. Rather than being propaganda functionaries, the fictional magazine's editors and journalists offer a wry and human perspective. *China Daily* has said of the series, “When language is inadequate, let laughter speak for us. . . . Perhaps this is one of the reasons why the language in the Stories sometimes appears ambiguous: Even the language wears a mask. One might read the screenplay between the lines and rethink their laughter.”⁶⁸

67. “Small path news” or “*xiaodao xiaoxi*” is the Chinese term for non-official information sources, which may include gossip and rumors but usually captures the flavor, if not the facts, of the news.

68. Xi Mi, “Words Worth a Laugh or Two in Newsroom Farce,” *China Daily*, April 25, 1992, p. 4.

“The Public Has The Right To Know”

In July 1992, a reporter for *Shanghai Legal News*, Li Zhigang, received official permission to cover a case in a Henan Province courtroom. When he arrived, court officers prevented him from entering, exposed his film after snatching his camera, and confiscated his press card. On August 8, *Shanghai Legal News* filed suit against the court. It claimed damages of 284 yuan (about \$56) and demanded an apology and the return of its reporter's press card.⁶⁹ This was the first time a newspaper had ever sued a court in China. The claim was rejected by the Henan Higher People's Court on August 26, and an appeal was then filed with the Supreme People's Court in Beijing.

The lawsuit provided the perfect opportunity for Shanghai press circles to convene a conference in mid-August to discuss the “legal rights and interests of journalists.” Participants included the deputy chair of the All-China Journalists Association, the chair of the Shanghai Journalists Association, and editors from *Xinmin Evening News*, *Shanghai Legal News*, and *Liberation Daily*. In news stories the next day, the press urged the “speedy formulation of a press law” to protect journalists.

One paper, *Liberation Daily*, ventured further. At the conclusion of its piece, the author wrote, “There are still sometimes instances in which the media's criticism and exposure of unhealthy things is disturbed, and this makes it very difficult for media to carry out its supervisory role.”⁷⁰ “Supervisory role,” or “supervision by public opinion,” is a code phrase that means the press should serve as an independent watchdog of government.

Liberation Daily followed this up one month later with an article by Qian Bocheng, a publisher and National People's Congress deputy, entitled, “All Should Concern Themselves with this Lawsuit.”⁷¹ Qian wrote:

It has been many years since journalists called for an early formulation of a press law. . . . Naturally, there have been many reasons the law has been put off and not been

69. Agnes Cheung, “Shanghai Paper Files Suit Against Henan Court,” *The Standard*, August 13, 1992, p. 10; *Xinmin Evening News*, August 10, 1992, p. 6.

70. Chen Wu, “The Media and the Legal Community of the City Together Issued a Call to Insure that the Proper Rights and Interests of Journalists are not Violated,” *Liberation Daily*, August 17, 1992, p. 8. Translated by Sophia Woodman.

71. Qian Bocheng, “All Should Concern Themselves With This Lawsuit,” *Liberation Daily*, September 9, 1992, p. 2.

published, the chief one being, I am afraid, unease concerning limiting power and duty — too many or too few limits are no good.

Now is the best time to solve this problem, I believe. The essence of Comrade Deng Xiaoping's remarks during his trip to the south — "We should be vigilant against rightists but mainly guard against leftists" — has pointed out a long-range corrective direction for formulating the press law. . . . If we really want to become an open China in the eyes of the world, we must first have an open press or must open up the press. Journalists have the right to interview, the media has the right to report, and the public has the right to know.

A few days later, *People's Daily* sponsored a seminar in Beijing called, "Supervision by Public Opinion and the Reform and Opening Program." Although the participants were not named, a Xinhua report quoted "comrades" as saying, "Normal media supervision affords an important means to assess a country's social civilization and progress. . . . Amid the spring tide of reform and openness, only the timely reflection of people's voices, demands, opinions and suggestions can foster a relaxed and harmonious social climate that is conducive to greater reform and openness."⁷²

Another encouraging sign appeared in one of the pro-Beijing newspapers based in Hong Kong. In an interview with *Ta Kung Pao*, the editor-in-chief of *Economic Daily* quoted Chairman Mao on the need for the press to support the planned economy of socialism and then said, "Obviously, this generalization can no longer apply." The editor, Fan Jingyi, recommended that journalists expand their definition of what is newsworthy, write stories that are timely, cover international markets and world economic issues, and adopt a fresh and lively style. Fan Jingyi justified his advice on the grounds that Deng himself advocated market-style reform.

News reports "dispatched ten days, two weeks, six months or up to a year after an event occurred" could not meet "the demand of the ever-changing market economy. . . and suit the increasingly keen competition in news reports." *Ta Kung Pao* also reported that Fan Jingyi believed newspapers were "special commodities, which

72. Wang Weixiang and Xun Yong, "Seminar Affirms 'Sacred Right' of Media to Criticize Society," Xinhua, September 12, 1992; "China Leaders Urge Greater Press Freedom," Reuters, September 13, 1992; Willy Wo-lap Lam, "Open Press Urged to Protect Reform," *South China Morning Post*, September 14, 1992, p. 10.

should advance toward markets and face competition, too. If they are officially run and officially read. . . it will be more difficult for them to get along."⁷³

These appeals for press reform were welcomed by liberal journalists and press-watchers. But whether they were spontaneous, or even as daring as they may appear, is questionable. Editors probably received a nod from the top, given in Li Ruihuan's August 1992 speech and perhaps also circulated in internal Party documents, before exploring such sensitive topics. Just as there are ideological lines that journalists oppose and propagate with reluctance, so are there directives — in this case, to promote cultural freedom and press reform — that they adopt with enthusiasm.

There were signs of a liberalizing trend at the 14th Party Congress in October 1992 in Beijing. Hardliners Gao Di, the director of *People's Daily*; Wang Renzhi, propaganda director; and He Jingzhi, acting culture minister, were all dropped from Central Committee posts.⁷⁴ Furthermore, He Jingzhi has reportedly been replaced as head of the Ministry of Culture by Liu Zhongde, a former deputy chief in the Central Propaganda Department.⁷⁵ Wang Renzhi has been succeeded by Ding Guangen, a reformist Politburo member close to deposed Zhao Ziyang.⁷⁶ And *People's Daily* director Gao Di has been replaced by Shao Huaze, who was also installed by hardliners after June 4 but is apparently less detested by the staff.⁷⁷

On the other hand, Secretary-General Jiang Zemin's speech at the Congress reaffirmed the absolute political supremacy of the Party. He advocated Deng's line on building a "socialist market economy," but gave no sign that China's system would soon become less totalitarian. To raise living standards and maintain its grip

73. Li Ping-Hua, "Interviewing Fan Jingyi, Editor-in-Chief of *Jingji Ribao*, on Press Reform and Changing Concepts," *Ta Kung Pao*, October 16, 1992, p. 2.

74. "Four 'Leftists' Not Elected CPC Congress Deputies," *South China Morning Post*, June 25, 1992, p. 10; Sheryl WuDunn, "Chinese Party Congress Replaces Nearly Half of Central Committee," *The New York Times*, October 19, 1992, p. 5.

75. John Kohut, "New Culture Minister Begins Sober Tenure," *South China Morning Post*, November 11, 1992, p. 10.

76. "'Reformers' to be Named to Standing Committee," *South China Morning Post*, September 25, 1992, p. 1; "China Liberal Tipped for Communist Propaganda Post," Reuters, October 7, 1992; "China Names Deng Ally as New Propaganda Star," Reuters, December 6, 1992; United Press International, December 7, 1992.

77. "The High-Level CPC Leadership Removed Gao Di from Office Because He Abused Power to Publish His Own Article," *Ming Pao*, October 19, 1992, p. 6; Li Hisao-chuang, "The High-Level CPC Leadership Decides to let Gao Di Retire and to Promote Shao Huaze as Renmin Ribao Director," *Ching Chi Jih Pao*, November 5, 1992, p. 7; "China Names Deng Ally as New Propaganda Star," Reuters, December 6, 1992.

on power, the Communist Party has opted for economic reform, but it still fears political revolt.

Shortly after the 14th Party Congress, a Xinhua News Agency editor named Wu Shishen was detained on charges of "selling state secrets." He had reportedly sold a copy of Jiang Zemin's speech to a reporter from a Hong Kong newspaper, *The Express*, which published a draft of the speech a week before it was given. In the summer of 1993, Wu Shishen was sentenced to life imprisonment. Another editor, believed to be his wife, was sentenced to six years for complicity in the same crime.

Despite the release of several prominent political prisoners, including Democracy Wall activist Wei Jingsheng, during China's campaign for the 2000 Olympic Games, other dissidents and writers continued to face the threat of arbitrary detention. In September 1993, Xi Yang, a mainland Chinese who reported for Hong Kong's *Ming Pao*, was arrested on charges of "stealing state secrets," a charge apparently relating to information he received about Bank of China's gold reserves. Several days later, Gao Yu, the former deputy chief editor of the banned *Economics Weekly*, who had previously spent fourteen months in jail, was arrested on charges that she "illegally provided state secrets to people outside the borders." The accusation is thought to stem from freelance writing she did for Hong Kong publications. Gao Yu, who had planned to leave China for the United States to become a visiting scholar at Columbia University, is being held in Beijing State Security Bureau Detention Center.

One of the brightest spots on the media scene is *China Business Times*. Unlike the gossip rags and scandal sheets that the current gold rush atmosphere has spawned, *China Business Times* attracts readers with solid financial reporting and frank opinion polls. The paper is owned by the quasi-non-governmental All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce, and enjoys a bit more latitude than the official press. For example, in July 1993 *CBT* ran a full-page feature titled: "Chinese Journalists, What Are Your Rights?"

At any rate, the press has experienced nothing like the renaissance of the spring of 1989. Improvements must be measured against the strident rhetoric of the military and political crackdown. The hope for Chinese journalism lies in the continuation of economic reform. If publishers are forced to become responsible for their own profits and losses, as is already happening at some news-

papers, market appeal is their only guarantee of survival.⁷⁸ That means offering the people what they want to read, rather than what the Party wants them to read.

In the meantime, journalists working in the Chinese media today have learned from people like Hu Jiwei and Liu Binyan. They are still inspired by the *World Economic Herald's* example of what a Chinese newspaper can accomplish. And they remember their own acts of courage in the spring of 1989. They know what they can do. The only question is: When will they be able to do it?

78. Willy Wo-lap Lam, "Authorities Promote Commercialization of Media," *South China Morning Post*, November 25, 1992, p. 13; "Provincial Secretaries Cited on Role of Media," *Xinhua*, December 8, 1992.

CHAPTER 5

THE HONG KONG MEDIA FACE 1997

June 30, 1997, is the midnight hour for Hong Kong. The British lease on the colony will expire, and this citadel of free-market capitalism will revert to Chinese rule. The Joint Declaration, signed in 1984 by Chinese and British officials, promises to recognize Hong Kong as a Special Administrative Region largely independent of Beijing, and it guarantees the preservation of Hong Kong's "way of life" for 50 years. But it doesn't say much about the right of Hong Kong's six million people to choose their leaders or express their views after Beijing takes over, and 60,000 people are emigrating each year.

Sentiment about the transition ranges from fear to guarded hope, but cynicism and resignation predominate. Residents of Hong Kong never have had democratic rule. They have enjoyed a great deal of freedom, but this is due more to the laissez-faire attitude of the colonial administration than to legal safeguards or democratic procedures. The rulers of China will decide how free they remain after 1997, and those rulers have been sending scary signals about their intentions.

Most recently, when Hong Kong Governor Christopher Patten proposed in October 1992 to increase democratic representation in the colony, Beijing threatened to invalidate all government contracts after the 1997 takeover.¹ Mainland and pro-Beijing newspapers in Hong Kong unleashed a stream of bitter rhetoric. The China-controlled *Ta Kung Pao* wrote that if Patten planned to "give China a 'stab in the back' during the remaining hours before sunset, the Chinese side will be forced to respond with a fatal weapon."²

The most dramatic warning came more than three years earlier, on June 4, 1989. The sight of tanks in Tiananmen Square shocked Hong Kong residents, long stereotyped as more interested in making money than playing politics. Forced to confront the real

1. Sheryl WuDunn, "China Threatens Contracts Reached by Hong Kong," *The New York Times*, December 1, 1992, p. 7.

2. Nicholas D. Kristof, "Hong Kong Tastes Democracy, and China Chokes," *The New York Times*, November 11, 1992, p. 5; "Cooperation or Confrontation After All," *Ta Kung Pao*, October 24, 1992, p. 2.

face of the Beijing regime, one million people mobilized in mass marches to protest the military crackdown. The precariousness of their position had been brought home, and many of them began to assert themselves against the passivity and fatalism that both Confucian and colonial culture tend to breed.

Hong Kong journalists were no exception. They knew how grim the situation was for their mainland counterparts, but the bloodshed of June 4 awakened them to the fact it might soon be equally grim for them. Now, as these journalists look toward 1997, opinions divide between a seemingly ungrounded optimism that a press as open as Hong Kong's cannot be silenced, and the view that unless China changes dramatically, it will never tolerate the free-wheeling reporting and analysis now found in the Hong Kong media. Some journalists predict dramatic improvement after Deng Xiaoping dies. Others believe that whatever Deng's fate, Hong Kong's influence on its big brother will be greater than the other way around. Whatever happens after 1997, one thing is clear: the taming of the Hong Kong press already has begun.

Fears, Careers and Self-Censorship

Hong Kong's spirited media is one of the hallmarks of its open society. Print media span the political spectrum, from pro-Taiwan to pro-Beijing. There are nearly seventy daily newspapers, in both Chinese and English, more than six hundred periodicals, two private television stations, a commercial radio station, and the government-owned Radio Television Hong Kong.

During the volatile spring of 1989, even the left-wing newspapers that follow Beijing's line ran editorials calling for the downfall of hardline Premier Li Peng. After the June 4 massacre, the Beijing-subsidized *Wen Wei Po* wrote: "The Li-Yang clique has pushed back the clock by bathing Beijing in blood."³ These papers soon felt Beijing's wrath. Li Zisong, the publisher of *Wen Wei Po*, was fired.⁴ Li has since founded his own magazine, *Contemporary*, with many former *Wen Wei Po* journalists. But prospects for *Contemporary* grow bleaker as Chinese rule approaches. It is one of several China-watching monthlies in Hong Kong that Beijing is known to detest.

3. Joseph Man Chan, "The Hong Kong Press in China's Orbit," in Chin-Chuan Lee, ed., *Voices of China: The Interplay of Politics and Journalism*, New York: Guilford Press, 1990, p. 147.

4. *Id.*, p. 150.

A poll of more than five hundred Hong Kong journalists in 1990 found that only three per cent believed they would remain free to report and comment on the news after 1997. About one-fourth said they already are "apprehensive" when criticizing the Chinese government. Only twenty-two per cent thought China's proposal for "one country, two systems" was feasible; about one-third said they plan to emigrate.⁵

Journalists say self-censorship is on the rise, but they find it hard to pinpoint examples. "It's not a question of stories being killed," said one freelance journalist. "It's that they don't emerge. This is both subtle and pervasive. Self-censorship is like a malignancy that's spreading."

Retaliation is not only a distant prospect; it is already happening. The Xinhua news agency, China's de facto embassy in Hong Kong, has admitted to holding dossiers on "anti-China elements."⁶ Journalists blacklisted by China find it almost impossible to get approval to enter the country. Access is critical for a journalist whose job is to cover the mainland.

Anonymity can provide some protection. During the spring of 1989, mainland papers ran stories on the student demonstrations under collective staff bylines. In Hong Kong, a reporter at an English-language daily said that sometimes his paper runs sensitive articles without bylines. "The management does not have specific editorial guidelines, but there is a subtle understanding. . . . For example, the recent article on personnel changes in Xinhua was published without a byline. Sometimes this is the editor's decision, sometimes the journalist's. It's protection against retaliation in terms of access, journalist visas, etc. It's not so much a post-1997 consideration as a current one."

Charlie Goddard, a writer who recently completed a book on freedom of expression in Hong Kong, says that although people distrust the Chinese government, "they've submitted to the idea of Chinese rule. . . . People are thinking, 'Should I really criticize, or should I keep my post-1997 options open?'"

5. Joseph Man Chan, Paul S. N. Lee, Chin-Chuan Lee, in an unpublished paper provided to CPJ entitled, "Hong Kong Journalists: A Summary of the Survey Findings," August 1990.

6. Kent Chen, "Beijing Admits Gathering Information on Residents: Focuses on 'Anti-Chinese Elements,'" *South China Morning Post*, April 1, 1992, p. 1; Lin Tsui-fen, "Public Security Minister Tao Siju Denies Hit-List, but Admits His Ministry, Xinhua Hong Kong Branch are Collecting Material on Hong Kong People," *Ming Pao*, April 1, 1992, p. 2.

Some major stories in China are under-reported not because of self-censorship, but because information is hard to get. "We'd like to do the inside story on [the economic boom in] Shenzhen, for example, but we can't find it out," said Willy Lam of the *South China Morning Post*, one of Hong Kong's two English-language dailies.

"A more subtle factor," Lam says, "is a tendency for newspapers and journalists who take a very hard line towards Beijing on human rights and political issues to be more lenient on the business side. I've talked to individual reporters who feel that if they've offended Beijing politically, they will write several stories extolling business opportunities in Dalian or wherever. It's a kind of compromise, to give China the benefit of the doubt economically."

Money makes Hong Kong tick. China and Britain agree that a smooth transition is necessary for the territory's continued economic prosperity. The less publicized trade-off is acquiescence on political issues. One member of the Hong Kong Publishers Society says, "It has to be more than just publishers and journalists that fight for press freedom. You have to get the business community behind you. I just don't think they will. It is the businesses that run Hong Kong."

The business community is widely viewed as a conservative force, concerned with profits and stability at the expense of civil and political rights. Some of its members run media outlets. The Hong Kong Journalists Association says it has information "regarding pressure from publishers and editors on journalists" to tone down critical pieces on China, but the charge would be hard to prove in court. "We can't name names," says the organization's chair, Daisy Li. "We can't afford a libel suit."

China can hit Hong Kong publishers where it hurts most — their wallets. Publications depend on advertising, and Xinhua has been known to pressure Chinese companies to withhold advertising from publications which they decide are unfriendly. Critical political monthlies receive almost no advertising, from either Hong Kong or Chinese businesses.

Newspaper owners also are eyeing the China market, both for customers and for investment opportunities in other enterprises. The prospect of selling to one billion consumers is as tantalizing to Hong Kong publishers as it is to Western corporations. And just like beat reporters, Hong Kong entrepreneurs want to maintain their access. "All the owners of papers and television stations are people who are either already doing or plan to do business in

China. So they are either actively currying favor, or they do not want to offend," said one journalist who asked not to be identified. Small wonder that the potential for conflicts of interests when publishers invest in China has not been covered by the Hong Kong press.

"Already in Hong Kong there's a lot of what you would kindly call realism towards the future," says Stacy Mosher, a former Hong Kong correspondent for *Far Eastern Economic Review*. Her husband, Jin Zhong, runs *Open* magazine, and she says they know of several satirical columns about China that have been dropped from Chinese-language papers. "Hong Kong newspapers are just like American businessmen. Everyone wants to crack the China market."

Co-optation also encourages self-censorship. Xinhua devotes prodigious energy to its "united front" work. It invites local journalists to banquets and wines and dines them, all in an effort to establish good *guanxi* — personal relationships that Xinhua hopes will blunt professional instincts. Xinhua's methods and motives are not subtle, and its lichee tours — fruit picking trips in southern China — are famous throughout the journalist community. Perry Mak, deputy publisher of *Hong Kong Economic Times*, says journalists cannot be 'compromised by a simple dinner, but Xinhua's efforts have met with some success.

"They've managed to re-build their image to a degree," says Charlie Goddard. "Whereas immediately after June 4, journalists were all calling for the [Chinese] government's downfall, now they just criticize small points."

Nevertheless, some highly critical articles about China still appear, especially in Hong Kong's political magazines. The most widely read are *Contemporary*, *Open*, and *The Nineties*. In 1990, *Contemporary* reported that Beijing had classified Hong Kong media into one of four categories: those that were China-controlled; those that were politically neutral but friendly; those that might be pro-Taiwan but could be co-opted through united front work; and those that had to be isolated and attacked. The political magazines fell into the last category.⁷

"At *Open*," says Mosher, "We don't even speculate about post-1997. My husband has always faced the possibility that he may have to take a different tone of criticism, a more subtle tone. A lot of

7. Emily Lau, "Big Brother's Blacklist," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, September 27, 1990, pp. 24-25.

people take that for granted." Mosher described a recent article about a publication in Poland that survived during communist rule by shrewdly veiling its criticisms, but, she said, "we don't know if Hong Kong will be as lucky as Poland."

George Shen, the editor of the widely respected *Hong Kong Economic Journal*, says he knows the Chinese government watches his paper because articles in *People's Daily*, *Ta Kung Pao*, and *Wen Wei Po* have criticized it. Born in Shanghai, Shen has refused to return to China since June 4, 1989. To maintain his neutrality, he refuses to visit Taiwan, too.

"I am a very old man," says Shen. "I won't be running this paper in 1997. As a Chinese, I hope things will get better. But I think the Communist Party will always maintain tight control. And I don't think the people of Hong Kong will stand up for their rights."

Shen's attitude is echoed by many leaders of the Hong Kong Newspaper Society. Shum Choi Sang, publisher of *Wah Kiu Yat Po*, says, "Hong Kong people do not like the communists, but they will be here in 1997 so they have to live with it."

Shum and Pun Chiu Yin, the newspaper's executive director, criticize people in Hong Kong who loudly demand democracy and human rights. "There is a high correlation between those who are outspoken, and those who have foreign passports," Pun says. "People with foreign passports cannot serve as spokesmen. People want stability, livelihood, and a smooth transition more than they want democracy."

Even some people who speak out for a free press in Hong Kong agree with Shum. "You just get the feeling that there's resignation," Mosher says. "Lack of protest is part of the whole Hong Kong attitude. People are not in control of their own fate. They weren't given the chance to decide things for themselves."

Hong Kong Reporters in China

The daily newspaper *The Express* recently scooped Jiang Zemin, the secretary-general of the Chinese Communist Party. On October 5, a week before the opening of the 14th Party Congress in Beijing, it published a draft of the speech he would give. *The Express* text was almost the same as the spoken version, a sure sign that the newspaper had high-level contacts with access to confidential documents.

The Express scoop was one any journalist would regard with pride, but the Chinese government did not see it that way. On October 25, shortly after the Congress closed, *The Express* correspondent in Beijing, Leung Wai-man, was detained on charges of espionage. Once held by the Ministry of State Security, she was denied permission to see her husband, her editor, or British consular officials. She was expelled to Hong Kong six days later, after she had signed what Xinhua claimed was an admission of guilt, and she was barred from returning to the mainland for two years. Xinhua says Leung paid money for state secrets, apparently meaning the Jiang Zemin speech.

The Express case illustrates why no Hong Kong Chinese correspondents are stationed on the mainland. Beijing considers Hong Kong Chinese to be nationals subject to Chinese law. Hong Kong residents have been arrested by Chinese authorities and one, Lau Shan-ching, was imprisoned in 1981 for ten years. Foreigners, at worst, get thrown out of the country. Willy Lam left China in 1988 when he was a correspondent for *Asiaweek* after two warnings from the Foreign Ministry. He holds a foreign passport. The only mainstream Hong Kong paper to have a Beijing bureau, the *South China Morning Post*, is staffed by expatriate Geoffrey Crothall.⁸

"There are no official regulations barring Hong Kong reporters from setting up bureaus in Beijing," says Daisy Li, a reporter for the newspaper *Ming Pao* and head of the Hong Kong Journalists Association. "But we are very reluctant to do so because sensitive stories will get the reporters into trouble. . . . If you step on the Chinese government, they will treat you according to mainland laws." In October 1989, the State Council's Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office promulgated new regulations governing the behavior of Hong Kong and Macao journalists in China.⁹ The main points were:

- Journalists must apply for permission to enter China through the Hong Kong branch of Xinhua.
- Only journalists working for "official" news media can apply.

8. *Ta Kung Pao* and *Wen Wei Po* do have mainland offices, but these Hong Kong papers are heavily subsidized and controlled by the Communist Party of China.

9. "Beijing Issues Regulations for Journalists," *South China Morning Post*, October 27, 1989, p. 1; "Regulations set out for Reporters," *China Daily*, October 28, 1989, p. 2; Phil MacDonald, "Journalists Ire over News Restrictions," *The Sunday Standard*, November 12, 1989, p. 1.

- Applications must be submitted at least fifteen days in advance and must include the purpose and duration of the trip, an itinerary, and names of people who will be interviewed.
- Those who wish to report from Beijing must register and apply for an interview permit from the All-China Journalists Association.
- Journalists also need approval from local associations in each place from which they plan to report.
- Reporters can report only on specified topics.
- Telephone interviews are forbidden.
- Hong Kong media may not employ local Chinese as reporters.
- Hong Kong journalists returning to visit family are not allowed to do reporting.

Hong Kong journalists frequently resort to tourist visas to enter China. The official approval process is very selective and, says Daisy Li, it is often "used to screen out unfavorable papers or journalists." Willy Lam has not been allowed to return to China and neither has VOA correspondent Max Ruston, who now heads VOA's Hong Kong bureau. Journalists must submit samples of stories as part of the application procedure, which presents a problem for those who previously criticized Chinese policy or reported while traveling on a tourist visa.

In February 1991, the rules were relaxed, slightly, for quick coverage of specific news events. It still took fifteen days to get approval to cover major happenings, but "to cover some accidental events, [journalists] may file their applications at any time, and the authorities concerned will reply as soon as possible."¹⁰ If reporters want to expand the pre-determined scope of their coverage, "they may lodge an application with the institution responsible for receiving them, and may conduct the additional activities after the authorities concerned approve the application." Although there is still a ban on telephone interviews, "in some special cases. . . questions may be answered by a spokesman for the institutions concerned" over the telephone.

The regulation requiring fifteen days' advance application to cover news events was dropped in November 1992, but the others,

10. "The Department Concerned in China Improves Points for Attention Regarding Hong Kong and Macao Reporters' Activities on the Mainland," China News Agency, February 25, 1991, translation in FBIS-CHI-91-038, February 26, 1992, p. 43.

including the ones barring "activities incompatible with status" and "long-distance telephone interviews," are still in effect.¹¹

These rules often get journalists into trouble. In November 1991, Chung Sze-Mui, a *Ming Pao* reporter who was in Beijing to cover the visit of U.S. Secretary of State James A. Baker III, made the mistake of also attending a press conference held by Chinese journalist Dai Qing after her release from detention. Later that month, after Chung's return to Hong Kong, she applied for permission to cover the visit of British Lord Caithness to Beijing and was denied, apparently because she had strayed over the boundaries governing her earlier visit's reporting topic. In 1992, the Hong Kong-based reporter for *Liberation*, Philippe Grangereau, was expelled from Shanghai after he met with dissidents from the Democracy Wall period. Grangereau, who entered China on a tourist visa as he had for six years, was told that he had committed activities "incompatible with his status" and was guilty of "illegal journalism." Journalists who do enter on official passes know they are closely watched.

The Fight Over Radio Television Hong Kong

A major front in the battle to preserve press freedom in Hong Kong is the struggle over the government broadcasting unit, Radio Television Hong Kong. RTHK operates seven radio channels in Chinese and English and produces programs aired on Television Broadcasts Limited (TVB) and Asia Television Limited (ATV), Hong Kong's two commercial stations. In 1985, the Broadcasting Review Board recommended that RTHK be split from the government to become an independent public broadcaster, much like the BBC in Britain or PBS in the United States.¹²

Three surveys conducted by the RTHK union show most of its members favor privatization, provided that certain salary and benefit conditions are maintained. The union in 1989 stated that the aim of privatization should be "maximum editorial independence for the news broadcaster. To this end, we feel that the RTHK Ordinance should stipulate in the strongest terms possible that RTHK should have complete control over its editorial policy." In a com-

11. Kent Chen, "Continuing Restrictions on Journalists Listed," *South China Morning Post*, November 14, 1992, p. 1; "Procedures to be Simplified for Reporters Visits," *Xinhua*, November 13, 1992, translation in FBIS-CHI-92-220, November 13, 1992, p. 70.

12. RTHK Programme Staff Union, "Briefing Paper on RTHK Corporatisation," June 22, 1992.

memorative album for RTHK's 60th anniversary in 1988, the director of broadcasting said, "In 1989, RTHK will turn into an independent broadcaster with a Board of Governors comprising independent individuals from the community at large. . . . In the run-up to 1997, politics will play an increasingly vital role; culture and education are also bound to experience dynamic changes. All these will make a notable impact on the newly independent RTHK."¹³

The director's words proved premature. Four years later, RTHK is still part of the government. Negotiations over privatization have bogged down in discussions of salary structure and job security, but the real stumbling block appears to be China. "China thinks we've begun this process of decentralization to defuse their power when they take over," says one administration official. "They think RTHK is and should remain a government mouthpiece."

One of Hong Kong's pro-Beijing papers, *Ta Kung Pao*, has described RTHK as a "handy official propaganda tool" used by the colonial administration "to elaborate its policies" and "help put these policies into effect."¹⁴ The Chinese government wants this tool at its disposal when it assumes control of the colony. After a Hong Kong official said RTHK privatization would go ahead even if China opposed it, a Xinhua official labeled such comments "irresponsible."¹⁵ During a Sino-British meeting in June, a member of the Chinese team warned, "For the sake of Hong Kong's stability: . . . RTHK had better not change or be touched."¹⁶

There have even been hints that China might not recognize the independence of RTHK. The director of the Chinese government's Office on Hong Kong and Macao Affairs said that after 1997 the new Hong Kong government "might want to restore the original system."¹⁷

RTHK journalists are terrified at the prospect of working for the post-1997 administration. In a June 1992 letter to the Hong Kong Government, the RTHK Union protested staff members' lack

13. *Sixty Years of Broadcasting in Hong Kong*, Hong Kong: Radio Television Hong Kong, 1988, p. 7.

14. Chen Cheng, "A Move Towards Making RTHK Independent," *Ta Kung Pao*, February 17, 1992, p. 3.

15. Shirley Yam and Carol Scott, "Xinhua Official Criticizes Comments on Radio," *South China Morning Post*, March 2, 1992, p. 1.

16. E Shan-Shan, "[Chinese Joint Liaison Group Leader] Guo Fengmin Answers Reporters' Questions," *Wen Wei Po*, June 19, 1992, p. 2.

17. Ken Chen and Lana Wong, "Mainland Official on Broadcasting Corporatization," *South China Morning Post*, March 5, 1992, p. 2.

of information about privatization plans, adding that they did not know whether they would "face a bleak future working for the propaganda arm of the Special Administrative Region."

Meanwhile, some of RTHK's more popular programs are drawing increasingly harsh criticism from the pro-China papers in Hong Kong. *Ta Kung Pao* and *Wen Wei Po* have repeatedly criticized "City Forum," a weekly televised discussion held in Victoria Park, and "Talkabout," an uncensored call-in show on Radio 1.¹⁸ RTHK bills "Talkabout" as "the medium for the silent majority to make known their views on Hong Kong's future."¹⁹

The pro-China papers find such outspokenness intolerable. They also object to the "overrepresentation" of democratic political parties, like the United Democrats led by Martin Lee. Lee is a leader in the Hongkong Alliance in Support of the Patriotic Democratic Movement in China and has been labeled "counterrevolutionary" by China. *Wen Wei Po* calls RTHK "a party radio, a propaganda arm [designed] to hit out maliciously at those who carry a different point of view. If it were to be 'privatized,' it would attack China and all parties other than the United Democrats."²⁰

In late summer 1992, an episode of the long-running drama series "Under the Lion Rock," was fiercely attacked. *Ta Kung Pao* and *Wen Wei Po* called it subversive and mocking. The episode, "Stormy Weather," was about a television editor trying to decide how to handle an interview with the leader of an unnamed country where there had recently been a military crackdown. The story line reminded viewers of a sycophantic interview with Chinese Premier Li Peng aired on TVB in 1992.²¹

RTHK cut the controversial episode in half after the pro-China papers denounced it. The station insists it was not bowing to leftist pressure; it says the show was simply too long. The director, Rachel Zen, says otherwise. "Twice before, I've overrun from forty-five

18. "RTHK Embroiled in Off-Screen Drama," *South China Morning Post*, September 11, 1992, p. 18.

19. *Sixty Years of Broadcasting in Hong Kong*, *supra* note 12, p. 21.

20. Candy Wong, "Enter the Angry Critics, Stage Left," *South China Morning Post*, September 6, 1992, p. 12.

21. Catherine Chan and Esther Wong, "Stormy Weather Whips up Political Typhoon," *South China Morning Post*, September 11, 1992, p. 6; Cliff Bale, "Li Peng Interview: Journalism or Propaganda," *The Journalist*, November 1991, p. 2.

minutes to ninety minutes and they just gave me two time slots. . . . They told me that if I didn't cut it, it would not be aired."²²

With its programs generating so much fury, RTHK may now have even less chance of becoming a non-government public broadcaster. The orchestrated attacks reflect Beijing's belief that the station has already become far too outspoken, and that a private RTHK would be unthinkable. "We may be civil servants now," said C.K. Wong, acting deputy director of broadcasting, "but we consider ourselves to be independent journalists. This can be changed overnight. We would like to continue business as usual, but it depends on both our own courage and determination, and on who our bosses are."

Striving for Legal Safeguards

Two major pieces of legislation are intended to see Hong Kong through the transition to Chinese rule. The first is the Basic Law, and the second is the Bill of Rights. Both contain clauses protecting freedom of the press, but legal safeguards mean nothing when laws are not observed. The Chinese Constitution also guarantees press freedom, and, as Chinese journalists know, it is a meaningless guarantee. That is why Hong Kong journalists are working vigorously to bolster their existing freedoms, attempting to construct a legal structure that will be hard to dismantle after 1997.

In April 1990, the National People's Congress in Beijing adopted the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR). The Basic Law will serve as a mini-constitution when it takes effect July 1, 1997. Great Britain agreed that any major political developments in Hong Kong before 1997 would "converge" with the spirit as well as the letter of the Basic Law, meaning that Beijing would be consulted for prior approval.²³

Much of the Basic Law is designed to reassure Hong Kong residents and investors that the territory's economic boom will continue. Article 5 states: "The socialist system and policies shall not be practiced in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, and the previous capitalist system and way of life shall remain unchanged for 50 years." The Chinese government will be responsible for for-

22. Esther Wong, "Stormy Weather Director Agrees to Trim Programme," *South China Morning Post*, September 12, 1992, p. 4.

23. Lo Chi-kin, "Constitution and Administration," in Sung Yun-Wing and Lee Ming-Kwan, eds., *The Other Hong Kong Report*, Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1991, p. 1.

eign affairs, but the SAR is promised "a high degree of autonomy" in local matters.

Article 39 states that the "provisions of the United Nations' International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. . . shall be implemented through the laws of the Hong Kong SAR," and Article 27 guarantees Hong Kong residents "freedom of speech, of the press and of publication." However, Article 23 holds that the SAR "shall enact laws. . . to prohibit any act of treason, secession, sedition, subversion against the Central People's Government, or theft of state secrets." China, with its own definitions of legal and illegal reporting, recently has charged several journalists with violating national security and revealing state secrets.

Furthermore, China is not a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Additionally, the Basic Law gives final power of interpretation to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, and not to the Hong Kong Court of Appeal.²⁴

Partly in response to the June 4 massacre, the Hong Kong Legislative Council passed the Bill of Rights in June 1991, incorporating into the laws of Hong Kong the United Nations' International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights. Article 16 guarantees the freedom "to seek, receive and impart information."²⁵ Beijing has already expressed doubts about the Bill of Rights and reserved the right to "re-examine" it after 1997.²⁶ In February 1991, Lu Ping, director of the Chinese government's Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office, warned that the Bill of Rights could not have superior status to the Basic Law, and that if it were to "override" the Basic Law it would be unacceptable to the Chinese government. A majority vote by the post-1997 legislature could repeal the Bill of Rights.²⁷

The colonial administration of Hong Kong has stated its intention to review laws that might contradict the Bill of Rights and either repeal or revise them. Many have been on the books for years and are rarely used, but their continued existence after 1997

24. *Ibid.*

25. Robert C. Tang, "The Legal System," in *The Other Hong Kong Report*, *supra* note 22, pp. 23-24.

26. Hsieh Ying, "United States Has No Right to Interfere in Hong Kong Affairs," *Wen Wei Po*, April 7, 1992, p. 31.

27. Hong Kong Journalists Association, "Submission to United Nations Human Rights Committee on the Third Periodic Report by Hong Kong under Article 40 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights," March 1991.

could provide Beijing convenient tools for repression. The Hong Kong Journalists Association has compiled a list of seventeen laws that could be used to threaten freedom of expression. Among them are several ordinances relating to television, telecommunications, and broadcasting; an Emergency Regulations Ordinance that permits the suppression of publications; and a Police Force Ordinance that allows searches and seizures of material. The television ordinance provides for prior-censorship of programs deemed threats to order and the closure of television stations for security reasons.

"The Hong Kong government seldom uses these laws, but after 1997 who knows what will happen?" says Daisy Li. The journalists association believes it would be harder for China to enact restrictions in the future if the current ones were repealed now. Although Governor Patten has agreed to review the laws, a blanket repeal appears unlikely. In fact, the Hong Kong government itself has dusted off some antiquated laws and used them against pro-democracy demonstrators to appease Beijing.

On October 23, 1989, an advisor to the governor wrote to the head of the Foreign Affairs Department of Xinhua. The letter said, "The Hong Kong Government has no intention of allowing Hong Kong to be used as a base for subversive activities against the People's Republic of China. [Xinhua] will have noticed the arrest of members of the April Fifth Action Group [a pro-democracy political organization] outside their National Day reception. They will also have noticed. . . that the Hong Kong Government has recently rejected a proposal for a permanent site for a replica statue of democracy. . . . The Hong Kong Government will continue to have a prudent regard for the special circumstances of Hong Kong and the interests and concerns of the Chinese Government."²⁸

True to its word, the government used the Police Force Ordinance to seize news videotapes from television stations in October 1989. The raw footage of April Fifth demonstrators, a pro-democracy group, was then used in the prosecution of some of the activists. In December 1989, under the Film Censorship Ordinance, sixteen minutes of a Taiwan-made documentary called "Mainland China 1989" were censored by authorities because they were likely to "severely damage good relations with other territories."²⁹

An official secrets act also will be in effect in Hong Kong after 1997 and could be used to limit freedom of expression. In 1989,

28. Robert C. Tang, *supra* note 24, p. 20.

29. See *supra* note 26.

Great Britain amended its Official Secrets Act, which until then had been so vague as to be almost unusable. The new legislation was imported to the colony in 1992, but it will not be in effect after the transition unless Hong Kong passes its own local version by 1997.³⁰ If Hong Kong does not act, China's more stringent variant will be applied because the Basic Law requires laws that prohibit the theft of state secrets (which are left undefined).

It may not be possible to devise an official secrets act that would survive beyond 1997. The government's information coordinator, Michael Hanson, says, "Even homegrown Hong Kong legislation could be repealed by the People's Republic of China if they argue that this is the prerogative of the sovereign power." But again, the Hong Kong Journalists Association believes China will find it politically difficult to enact a repressive version if there is a liberal Hong Kong law already in place.

Journalists in Hong Kong also are fighting for legislation to guarantee the right of access to government documents. They argue that a comprehensive freedom-of-information ordinance, similar to the one in the United States, is needed. According to a position paper prepared by the journalists association and two other groups, this law "would set down a legal obligation on the government to disclose information unless such information was otherwise lawfully exempted. The presumption of the law is a positive one of disclosure" where the burden of proof would be on the government.³¹ Such a law would pressure the administration, both now and post-1997, to be more accountable and transparent.

Even those working for the passage of a freedom-of-information ordinance have grave doubts that it would endure beyond 1997. The government information coordinator says bluntly that any law has to be acceptable to Beijing to remain in effect. Emily Lau, a legislator and former journalist, rejects the government's position. "If they think freedom of information is not transcendable, why did they pass the Bill of Rights?" she asks. "If you wait until our rights are taken away, it's too late."

In his October 7, 1992 address to Hong Kong, Governor Patten proposed several steps, later attacked by Xinhua and Beijing, to guarantee the rule of law and an independent judiciary and to make

30. Fanny Wong, "Official Secrets Act to Converge with UK Law," *South China Morning Post*, June 9, 1992, p. 3; Jeremy Lau and Connie Law, "Party Warns Against Extending UK Secrets Act," *South China Morning Post*, June 11, 1992, p. 1.

31. Position paper prepared by the Hong Kong Journalists Association, Human Rights Commission, and Justice, February 1992.

possible the widest possible democratic participation. Regarding freedom of the press, he said:

I have heard the arguments for a freedom-of-information ordinance and for a review of current laws which might have a bearing on press freedom. . . . We cannot take press freedom for granted. But I should make clear at the outset my serious doubts about the value of general declaratory legislation. Such legislation frequently has the opposite of the intended effect.

Frank Ching, arts and society editor for *Far Eastern Economic Review*, attributes the Hong Kong Government's resistance to measures like the freedom-of-information ordinance to the fact that "it is a conservative colonial administration. They like to say that democracy is not the people's priority. The British have made Hong Kong people politically impotent."

One freelance journalist who has fought hard for laws protecting freedom of expression believes "self-censorship is structural in Hong Kong. It's been here so long that it's embedded, both in Chinese and colonial culture. Freedom of expression is in a bad state because it exists by grace rather than by right."

Michael Hanson, the government spokesman, predicts that the press will become more and more placid as 1997 approaches. He does point out, however, that the Basic Law and the Joint Declaration both guarantee an independent judiciary, and that "the only safeguard of an independent press is an independent judiciary."

In fact, it is doubtful that either can exist without the other. Hong Kong's Justice of Peace, Robert C. Tang, writes:

The viability of the concept of 'one country, two systems' in turn will depend on whether the two systems are compatible. Whether the two systems can coexist will depend to a large extent on whether China will tolerate freedom of expression. The Hong Kong system, by and large, permits political dissension and protects the right to free expression. Such right includes a right to criticize everyone, including the Chinese government.

An essential feature of the Hong Kong system is captured in Voltaire's famous statement that 'I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.' Unless China is prepared to tolerate that kind of

attitude in Hong Kong after 1997, the survival of our legal system must not be taken for granted.³²

32. Robert C. Tang, *supra* note 24, p. 25.

APPENDIX

PRESS REFORM LAW

The drafting of a press law that would have enabled the news media to expand the limited independence they had gained in the 1980s came to a halt after the 1989 crackdown. In the following article, originally published in the Summer 1992 edition of Human Rights Tribune, Allison Liu Jernow examines the debate on the media's role that took place during the reform decade.

When the National People's Congress Standing Committee met in late June 1989, just days after the military crackdown, consideration of a draft press law, which had been slated for discussion before the student demonstrations began, was abruptly shelved. While *xinwen gaige*, or "press reform," had been a hot topic in the late 1980s, removal of the press law from the NPC Standing Committee agenda reflected the conservatives' view that liberalization had gone much too far. The media, which had displayed a daring measure of independence during the heady days of student protests, were to be brought back under firm Party control.

Only six weeks earlier, journalists in the capital had entertained vastly different hopes. Hundreds of them, including staffers of major Party papers, had marched in the streets and signed a petition calling for greater freedom of expression. In mid-May 1989, in an article in *Beijing Review*, the English-language weekly, an editor wrote, "The outburst of discontent among Chinese journalists is expected to hasten the pace of press reform which, when fully realized, is likely to be the first breakthrough in the reform of China's political structure." Instead, the discontent generated fear and confusion among China's aging leadership, and ultimately, an assertion of its authority through a flexing of military muscle. The response to calls for open dialogue was the elimination of dialogue.

The need for press reform was first publicly recognized in the early 1980s, once order and a modicum of regulated political process had been restored to the country after the upheaval of the Cultural Revolution. The government attempted to codify its policies and administrative procedures to guard against the arbitrary lawlessness of what it dubbed "The Ten Years of Chaos."

The 1982 constitution paid lip service to the concepts of free speech and free expression for all citizens, but these were empty formalities in a country where all media belong to the state. Journalists complained that they were still subjected to unwarranted interference and harassment. Although there was no pre-publication censorship by government review, journalists and editors had to toe the party's constantly changing ideological line. Aware that writing on sensitive subjects could get them fired or worse, reporters exercised self-censorship. Former *People's Daily* reporter Liu Binyan recalled, "We felt we needed a concrete law to elaborate the terms of press freedom, to define in detail what we could and could not do."

Drafting a Liberal Future

Hu Jiwei, a former editor-in-chief of *People's Daily*, was entrusted in 1984 with the task of drafting a press law. A committed believer in the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) prior to the excesses of the Cultural Revolution, Hu gradually had become more liberal-minded. Appointed editor-in-chief by Deng Xiaoping in 1977, he turned the newspaper into one of the most outspoken in China. During the short-lived Campaign against Spiritual Pollution in 1983, Hu was forced to resign. But he retained his position as a member of the Standing Committee of the NPC and vice-chair of its Education, Science, Culture and Public Health Committee.

When the political winds shifted the following year, it seemed fitting that Hu be compensated for his loss of title. In consultation with scholars from the Institute of Journalism of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, in 1984 Hu began work on the formulation of a press law.

In 1989, after many delays, a draft was scheduled to be submitted to the NPC Standing Committee. But the debate over the purpose of a press law proved so divisive that three separate versions were in circulation. Although none of these was openly available then or now, it is clear from media reports that disagreements on matters of principle prevented the writing of a unified law.

The Government Takes Over

Hu's own attempts were sidelined but not completely thwarted during the Anti-Bourgeois Liberalization Campaign of 1986-87. The State Council created a new organization, the State Press and Publications General Administration (SPPGA), and charged it with

approving all publications' licenses, supervising the sale and distribution of newsprint and paper, and studying press law. China-watchers at the time felt it was a move to rein in those papers and magazines which had become too politically autonomous. Hu Jiwei was one of the advisors to this group, but actual power had shifted to Du Daozheng, the former editor-in-chief of *Guangming Daily*, who was the first director of the SPPGA. Meanwhile, a Shanghai-based group of experts on law and media, apparently formed at the direction of Politburo member Hu Qili, began work on a press law of its own.

Much of the conflict centered on the function of the media and, consequently, the role of the Party in guiding the people. In the classic CCP formulation, the press is governed by the Party, and the will of the Party is synonymous with the will of the people, so the press best serves the interests of the people by propagating Party policy. In a 1985 speech entitled, "On the Party's Journalism Work," then-CCP Secretary-General Hu Yaobang explained, "The Party's journalism is the Party's mouthpiece, and naturally it is the mouthpiece of the people's government, which is led by the Party, and also the mouthpiece of the people themselves."

In extensive research at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Institute of Journalism in 1988, Judy Polumbaum documented attitudes to this view of journalism.¹ In theory, she said, the press simultaneously practiced "hegemonic" communication, "in which the governors address the governed," and "petitionary" communication, "in which the governed address the governors." In practice, however, China's press corps "has almost always served hegemonic interests over petitionary ones." The dual function becomes increasingly impossible as "leaders" and "readers" demand different things, Polumbaum concluded. The CCP leadership, however, generally has been reluctant to admit the contradiction.

Other people, Hu Jiwei among them, disagreed sharply with the role of the press as Party mouthpiece. They cited the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution as examples of disastrous Party blunders. Proponents of a law that protected freedom of the press argued that the public should be able to comment on and even criticize political decision-making. Hu had the backing of a majority of newspaper editors, journalists and the public, according

1. "The Tribulations of China's Journalists After a Decade of Reform," in C.C. Lee, ed., *Voices of China: The Interplay of Politics and Journalism*, New York: Guilford Press, 1990, pp. 33-68.

to several studies. The usually orthodox People's University in Beijing conducted an opinion poll of high-ranking cadres which found that seventy-five percent believed that the media had failed to "actively criticize and supervise government leadership at all levels."

In a 1988 interview with the official China news agency, Hu said, "Over the past two years, the drafting of the journalism law has been repeatedly obstructed and met with many problems; the cause lies chiefly in disputes over matters of principle." He stressed that he believed a socialist journalism law would protect press freedom, not put arbitrary controls on journalism.

Stability Enhanced by Freedom

Hu claimed that a law which guaranteed press freedom would give people a constructive outlet for their frustrations, opinions, and ideas, thus benefiting overall social order. One of the last editions of the trail-blazing *World Economic Herald* contained a widely reprinted editorial by Hu entitled, "There Will Be No Genuine Stability Without Press Freedom." He wrote, "The authority formed under conditions without news freedom can only be an autocratic authority. It will only be able to make people silent but will never be able to quench the people's resentments and indignation."

This viewpoint was espoused by other reform-minded officials as well. Yu Haocheng, a legal expert and former head of the Masses Publishing House, believed that basic freedoms were necessary for China's modernization. He called for a press law that would allow non-official publications, and wrote, "The tools of information must be independent of the rulers, otherwise the people will not be able to enjoy freedom of expression and publication, the two freedoms which guarantee their rights to know what is happening, engage in political discussion, and supervise the government."²

This interpretation of a press law argues for greater "transparency" and accountability in government. Such a view was opposed by the Party hardliners who transferred ultimate drafting power to the bureaucrats at SPPGA. SPPGA Director Du reminded the public that press freedom was a "two-edged sword," and argued that the law should define both the freedoms and duties of journalists. His discussion of rights and their concomitant responsibilities is reminiscent of certain clauses of the Chinese Constitution, specifically the provision which states, "The exercise by

2. *Human Rights Tribune*, Vol. II, No. 5.

citizens of their freedoms and rights may not infringe upon the interests of the State, of society, and of the collective. . . .”

While the stalemate between the theoretical camps represented by Hu and Du stymied efforts to draft a press law, the need for one had grown. *Gao jizhe re* — “suing journalists fever” — had struck China. The number of libel cases in the courts rose dramatically, and a significant proportion involved the media. A signed commentary in *Guangming Daily* in December 1988 appealed for protection of journalists’ basic rights. “Pointed and acute criticism from the media will be helpful to rectify those unhealthy tendencies in society as well as in the Party. But if the reporters have to cope with various kinds of lawsuits against their critical coverage. . . there will be no hope for socialist democracy and no way to supervise corrupt officials.”

Criticism Gains Official Sanction

Ironically, the muckraking reports that gave rise to lawsuit fever were in part the result of official encouragement of the media’s watchdog function. Premier Zhao Ziyang, in a major speech given at the 13th Party Congress in October 1987, stressed the need for *yulun jiandu* — “supervision by public opinion.” Journalists interpreted Zhao’s remarks as support for writing critically. The chief editor of Xinhua News Agency, in a 1988 speech to domestic branch directors, encouraged the agency’s reporters to “bring to light some falsehoods and shameful events so that people can judge and criticize.”

Xinhua’s chief editor also urged restraint. “In filing critical press reports, we should analyze whether our exposition and criticism of problems can produce educative results. . . . There is no need to file press reports on shameful events that do not have educational or press value. In addition, in filing press reports we should consider the image of the Party, the government, and the People’s Army. Individual, occasional events harmful to the image of the Party, the country, and the People’s Army should not be given publicity.”

Similarly, in July 1988 a commentary in *Zhongguo Jizhe* (*Chinese Reporter*) discussed the need for press coverage that “let[s] the people know about important events and discuss[es] important issues,” and called for more “transparency.” But, the article continued, “‘Transparency’ does not mean ‘not having a limit.’ Being transparent should have a ‘limit.’ Where does the limit lie? It lies in

whether the increased transparency of press coverage is or is not conducive to reform, opening up, and the four modernizations, the fundamental interests of the people, and to the understanding and trust between the party and government on the one hand and the people on the other.” Some journalists nicknamed this formulation *pai cangying, bu da laohu* — “swat flies, don’t hit tigers.”

The would-be framers of a press law were pulled between these opposing principles: coverage should be expanded, but too much coverage would be a bad thing. Journalists needed to be protected from libel suits, but the government needed to be protected from journalists. The law should expand the rights of journalists, and the law should define their limits. The arguments over a press law reflected, in short, the arguments over the future of the country, as the authorities wavered between promoting reform and opening up and castigating the corrupting influence of Western “bourgeois liberalization.” The result was a stalemate.

Restrictive Law Worse Than No Law?

In the meantime, Chinese journalists worried that a press law resulting in greater government control would be worse than no press law at all. A former editor of *China Daily* was quoted by the *South China Morning Post* as saying, “If we are still fundamentally in disagreement on the issue of freedom of the press, it is best not to implement [the law] soon. A new press law will not necessarily mean more press freedom. It could mean more control.”

In addition to their lack of accord on the role of the media, Du and Hu differed on the means by which any draft would become law. The SPPGA maintained that a final draft, after consultation with specialized groups, would be passed by the NPC Standing Committee. Hu and others felt that the law should come before the National People’s Congress as a whole and not just its Standing Committee. They wanted drafts made available to the public for discussion. A veteran *People’s Daily* journalist said, “If it was submitted to the Congress as a whole, the draft would draw more attention and press freedom would become a national issue. . . . Hu Jiwei knew the Standing Committee would be unlikely to approve the draft law, so he wanted it to go to the whole Congress.”

Expanding participation in drafting and approving a press law, as advocates of press freedom desired, was never likely. What occurred instead was intense analysis in the official news media. Xinhua, *Chinese Reporter*, *China Daily* and *People’s Daily* all ad-

addressed the need for a press law, citing it as a crucial first step in media reform. Journalists organized conferences, ostensibly to exchange ideas about press reform but really to promote the idea of a free press. As a former *People's Daily* editorial writer described it: "We published articles about these press forums in order to spark national attention and put public pressure on the policy-making."

The liveliness of this debate, and the open acknowledgement of the need for reform of the existing system, paved the way for press demonstrations in the spring of 1989. By the time journalists took to the streets shouting slogans such as, "Don't force us to lie," and "We must speak the truth," they were merely taking a visible and forceful stand on ideas they had been discussing for years.

After June 4, Hu Jiwei was expelled from the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress; a few months later he was also expelled from the Party. Hopes for emancipation of the press were deferred indefinitely, and it remains to be seen when and in what form they will resurface.

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